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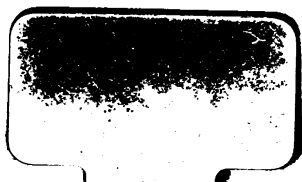
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JEW OR CHRISTIAN

A STORY OF
BERNARD AND BESSIE

IZ A. Google

1157. f. 164b.



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A Story of
BERNARD AND BESSIE.

BY
IZA.



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Introduction.

THE facts of the story to which I am about to introduce my readers, occurred in the year 1862, or, at any rate, commenced about that time, in a large fashionable watering place on the South Coast. Although most of the persons referred to did not belong to a fashionable class of the community, but rather to those who had to gain a livelihood, either by their hands or brain, I shall endeavour to adhere, as near as possible, to the facts as they occurred; only slightly altering the names of persons and places.

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JEW OR CHRISTIAN.

CHAPTER I.

BESSIE AND FANNY.

ON a beautiful July evening in the year 1862, in a neatly furnished parlour, sat two young girls, both under twenty years of age. Let us just take a glance at them. Bessie, the slightly elder of the two, was a tall fair girl,—in fact, as she herself said, “too tall, and she hoped she would not grow any more.” She had blue eyes, that sometimes sparkled with fun and mischief, and were at other times pensive, almost to sadness. The other young girl, Fanny, was short, rather dark, and exceedingly pensive and quiet, but still very interesting. These two girls, though so unlike in appearance and character, and often differing on various subjects, were, nevertheless, great friends. They were sitting at a table, with books open before them, apparently studying; for I must tell you that they were teachers in a large day school, and

were preparing for the forthcoming examination, at which they expected to obtain Queen's scholarships, in order to enter one of the well-known training colleges.

As I said before, the books were open, but they were evidently not being used this evening. These girls rarely quarrelled, but still any one could see something was amiss now, for they were talking to each other in anything but friendly fashion. Bessie suddenly announced her intention of going home, and, suiting the action to the word, rose, put on her walking attire, wished her friend Good-night, and went out.

Bessie did not live far away, and she generally spent her evenings with her friend; her home was quieter for their studies, Fanny having only a widowed mother, while in Bessie's home there were younger members of the family. She left Fanny much earlier this evening than usual; but then, as she said to herself, what was the use of remaining there in that unpleasant mood. As she slowly walked down the street, she suddenly remembered that home at this particular period would not be over pleasant, for father and mother were both in the country, and there was only a married sister with her husband superintending affairs, and they might ask her some unpleasant questions, as to why she returned so much earlier than usual. "I

know what I will do," thought Bessie, "I'll have a walk. Yes, a walk. Why should I not have one? The evening is splendid; and perhaps I shall meet some of my friends." As the young lady walked briskly in the direction of the sea, she felt quite invigorated and refreshed; and thought how stupid she must have been to remain indoors so long. The sea did indeed look charming, and the esplanade was filled with fashionable folks; the bands were playing lively airs, and every one seemed enjoying the evening. Bessie listened for a short time to the band, wandered about a little, but soon grew weary; she had not seen any of her friends, therefore she thought she had better wend her steps homeward. Ah, Bessie, you little thought how soon you would revisit these scenes! But I must not anticipate. On entering the street where she lived, she observed a young girl, Miss Don Savant by name, whom she knew slightly, talking with a gentleman. She accosted Bessie, and began chatting merrily, but did not introduce the gentleman, which Bessie thought rather rude on her part. Before, however, she could think much about it, Miss Don Savant said, "O please excuse me while I take this small parcel indoors: I will come back in a minute or two."

Without waiting for a reply, she suddenly disappeared, leaving Bessie and the stranger together.

The smile on the gentleman's face betrayed his amusement at the situation ; but nothing daunted, he began talking to Bessie in a quiet, easy, pleasant fashion, as if he had known her for a long time, though he had never, to his knowledge, seen her before or even heard her name.

Bessie, however, was not quite so ignorant about him, for she had heard his name and something about him from the aforesaid young lady.

Bessie at length remarked, "I do not think Miss Don Savant will return ; so I must wish you Good evening."

To which the gentleman replied, "I do not think she will, as I was merely asking her a question about my friend, Mrs. Neather. But let me beg of you not to run away just yet: the evening is so fine and beautiful. May I not have the pleasure of taking you for a walk?"

"Oh, no: I thank you," said Bessie. "I was just returning home from one!"

"Do have another walk, only a short one," pleaded the gentleman. "It is not late ; and I will see you safely home."

With a little more persuasion Bessie consented. "Thank you," said the gentleman, "Now if you will excuse me one minute, I will tell Mrs. Neather not to expect me yet. I was just on my way thither when I met Miss Don Savant."

It may be as well to inform my readers, however, that this manœuvre, on his part, was only to inquire of his friend what she knew of the young lady he had become so suddenly interested in.

Left alone, Bessie thought, "What am I doing? I am not acting very wisely: in fact, I am afraid I have already over-stepped the bounds of propriety; and, perhaps, even now I had better return home at once."

But the stranger did not give her much time for consideration: he soon re-appeared, and, with the utmost nonchalance, offered Bessie his arm, and they proceeded on their walk.

CHAPTER II.

MR. ST. VINCENT.

MR. BERNARD ST. VINCENT, for that was our hero's name, began the conversation thus: "Miss Don Savant left us in a rather awkward predicament. Allow me to introduce myself,—Bernard St. Vincent. Now," said he, playfully, "if you will kindly condescend to tell me your name I shall be much pleased."

To which request Bessie laughingly replied, "Bessie Lester."

Here we will leave our friends for a short time, while I introduce you a little more fully to Bernard.

He was the eldest son of a highly-connected Jewish family; had been carefully educated, and was expected to follow the career of a city merchant. But circumstances arose which ordered it otherwise, and at the period my story commences, he resided at this watering-place, which we shall designate "Brinybeach."

He was very tall, not over stout, had dark brown hair,—in which now, however, might be seen streaks of grey,—moustache and whiskers inclining to red. Altogether he looked a great deal older than he really was. Bessie, in discussing him afterwards with her friend Fanny, said she thought he must be nearly fifty years of age; but then she was no judge. For, do not laugh, dear reader, at her simplicity, Mr. Bernard St. Vincent wanted a few weeks to complete his thirty-fifth year.

“However,” as Bessie added, “he is extremely gentlemanly, polite, and altogether a pleasant companion.”

To return to fragments of their conversation.

“You are very fond of reading, are you not?” said Bernard.

“That I am,” replied Bessie; “but I have not much time for that purpose.”

Bernard answered, “I have a number of books: I will bring you two or three.”

Our friends walked and talked till they unexpectedly reached Bessie’s home; and the time had passed so pleasantly and quickly, that it was later than they thought.

“May I have the pleasure, Miss Lester, of seeing you again to-morrow?”

“I am sure I can scarcely tell, for I shall have a great deal to do; and I am afraid it would be too

late before I could possibly come. Indeed, I am almost sure to be engaged till eight o'clock."

"That will not be too late, Miss Lester. I shall look forward to seeing you about that time to-morrow."

That point being settled to his evident satisfaction, he bade Bessie a reluctant Good-night.

After parting from his fair companion, he called upon Mrs. Neather, and of course was a great deal rallied on his evening's proceedings.

He, on his part, did not seem to mind that, so long as he could gain any information respecting Miss Lester.

Bessie, in her own room, pondered, and conjectured, and felt half ashamed that she had walked and talked to a stranger.

"But he certainly was very nice; and, yes, I quite seemed to forget that until this evening I had not known him. How strange: it seems as if I had known him for years and years! Well, I cannot help it now. Have I not promised to meet him again to-morrow? So I must leave it. I wonder what Fanny will think of my naughty doings. I will try and not think any more about it to-night." So Bessie accordingly prepared to retire.

CHAPTER III.

NEXT MORNING.

AT twenty minutes to nine o'clock there was a rap at the door, and Bessie exclaimed, "Why I declare there is Fanny before I am quite ready ! Please let her in, Marion."

"Good morning, Bessie dear ; I have called a little earlier than usual, that we might have a chat on our way to school."

Bessie is soon ready, and the two girls started on their accustomed walk.

Fanny said, "I was so sorry, dearest, that I was not pleasant last evening ; after you left I felt so unhappy. Do forgive me, and promise that you will spend a nice long time this evening with me."

Seeing that Bessie hesitated, she pleaded, "Now do, dear : do not punish me any more by staying away."

"I am sure, Fanny, I quite forgive you," replied Bessie. "I have not the slightest doubt that I was

quite as much to blame as you in our last night's affair; but to spend the evening with you is quite another question, for I have already promised to meet a friend and take a walk."

Bessie narrated some of last night's proceedings; but had not time to enter much into particulars.

"Oh, Bessie dear, how could you? Do please tell me who he is."

"I cannot tell you any more now, for here comes Miss Calthrop, and it is quite time we were in school."

Although Bessie was not twenty years of age, she had not been without admirers. I am afraid she was somewhat of a flirt; yet, to do her justice, she did not mean to be one, but circumstances made it appear so.

Poor Fanny loved Bessie so dearly that she could not bear the thought of any one sharing her affections. It brought very vividly to her mind now how very miserable she felt on the last occasion. She had scarcely recovered from that, and had Bessie all to herself.

For not long since, Bessie and a young fellow, in the same capacity as herself, thought themselves desperately in love for a short time; indeed I must do them justice and state that they really loved each other, after a certain fashion. You will ask then, perhaps, how it was they did not continue so

doing. It was just this: they could not stand the banter and teasing they were continually subjected to. Some of Bessie's acquaintances said to her, "Why, Bessie, Mr. Carlton is younger than you are; and, what is worse still, is shorter. The gentleman ought to be both older and taller than the lady."

And so it came to pass that these two agreed to be friends only; though, as Bessie afterwards remarked, Mr. Carlton was only a month or two younger, and was in reality quite as tall as herself.

"Well, I'll try and please you all next time, if I can," says Bessie, saucily. "Let me see, the gentleman, you say, must be older, and of course much taller. I will try and remember what you tell me."

Ah, dear reader, if Bessie could be asked now about this period of her history, she would say, "My dear young friends, do not, I beseech you, treat the subject so lightly: it is indeed a serious matter, and it is altogether wrong and wicked to teaze and trifle with young people on such an important subject as matrimony."

So Mr. Carlton and Bessie agreed to be friends only. And at this Fanny was well pleased, for she liked not the young man, and in her estimation he was not good enough for Bessie.

As Fanny thinks over all this, and what she has just heard, she feels very sad indeed, and in her heart hopes it may not last long, nor lead to anything definite. However, I must dismiss the subject, for it was quite school time.

CHAPTER IV.

SCHOOL.

THE children assembled, Miss Calthrop gives out the hymn, and looks to Bessie to start the tune; they all then join in singing Bishop Ken's well-known beautiful morning hymn :

“Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run ;
Shake off dull sloth, and early rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice.”

I need not repeat any more, for the hymn, I have no doubt, is familiar enough to most people.

After the singing was concluded, a simple prayer was offered, which even the young children could understand; and then the morning's work fairly began.

In this school there were about 200 children, on the average, in daily attendance. Miss Calthrop was the mistress, Bessie the eldest teacher; but Fanny was in the same year of apprenticeship as

herself, and they had studied and been companions throughout their school career, which was now fast drawing to a close, for in the following December their time would expire.

Miss Calthrop had instructed, and gone through all the time with them, consequently, she took a great interest in these two young students. In fact, she intended leaving this school at the same time as they did, and taking one in the neighbourhood of London, in order to be near her favourites while at college. Miss Calthrop was exceedingly anxious they should do well, and spared no pains to bring her desire to a happy fulfilment.

There were also in the school some younger teachers and two candidates to fill up the vacancies of Bessie and Fanny when they left.

To return to the business of the hour, Miss Calthrop addressed Bessie: "Please arrange the second and third division on the gallery with yours for the Scripture lesson."

"Oh, dear me," thinks Bessie: "this morning of all others, to have so many!" but she goes on to arrange the children in order, and then Miss Calthrop comes forward quietly and says, "I will give the Scripture lesson this morning: you and Fanny can have a quiet half-hour to study this," handing Bessie a book, and pointing out the page.

"Thank you, Miss Calthrop," said Bessie, much pleased ; and she then hastened to Fanny.

The two girls quickly take their chairs into the playground, that being the quietest spot, and the weather warm. They were both too conscientious to waste the time thus generously given them in chatting over their own affairs, though their thoughts would occasionally wander ; and all too quickly the moments flew, and the time seemed soon up for them to go into the school and begin their work.

A pleasant, cheerful little song was being sung by the children while they marched into their respective classes for reading, then ten minutes play, other lessons followed ; and so the morning passed pleasantly and quickly away. The happy children smilingly wished their teachers Good morning. Any stranger, seeing them dismissed, would not hesitate to say that school to them must be a pleasant place ; and indeed it was : they could all join heartily in singing one of their little songs :—

Next to home we are pleased in our sweet infant school :

'Tis there we're instructed in each pretty rule ;

And each in their turn, we have lessons and play ;

And cheerfully spend with each other the day.

School, school, sweet school :

We like well our school.

And here it may not be amiss to say a few words,

as, no doubt, some of my readers may be teachers ; if not as a profession, still teachers for the love of it. Many gentlemen, and ladies too, give up their ease and time to teach in Sunday schools. And why? Because of the love they bear to the Great Master: they long to help to teach the little ones to love Him also, for without this love they cannot work successfully,—love is the secret of success.

Children, for the most part, are such keen observers, they soon understand whether their teachers love them, and work from the love they bear to their Father in heaven. Even with this love in their hearts, and an intense desire to work for the Master, still oft times they are very sad and cast down: they do not always see the fruit of their labour. But persevere, dear teachers: pray much, and leave the result in your heavenly Father's hand. In some cases you will be compensated: your hearts will be gladdened. For how you will rejoice when your class greets you with smiles, because you have won their love and confidence ; and you will see how eagerly they will gather round you to listen to the words you have to tell them of Jesus, the tender Shepherd who invites the little ones to come unto Him.

Our two young friends, Bessie and Fanny, dearly loved their work: they often, in talking to their friends, would say, when asked if it were not very

wearisome: "Oh, we feel very tried, weary, and even disheartened at times; but we love the work and the children: and if we had to make choice again of an occupation, we should choose the same as we have done."

They were in conversation one day with some young teachers belonging to another school, when some of their class passed by. The children curtsied, and said, "Good afternoon," with pleasant faces, and Bessie and Fanny smilingly acknowledged them.

"Oh," said the other teachers, "how can you allow those children to recognise you in the street! We always caution ours not to take any notice of us, as everybody would know we were teachers."

"Indeed," said Bessie, answering for both, "we do not mind being thought only teachers. And did you not notice how pleased the dear little things looked? Why, it quite cheers us to know they are so pleased to see their teachers again so soon!"

"We are glad you like it," replied the others. "Everyone to their taste."

But to return to our story: we left Bessie and Fanny in the school room. They, with the younger teachers, all gathered round the table, with Miss Calthrop at the head, for lessons, and then hurried home to their dinner. As they have to be in

school again by two o'clock, they have not much time for anything; "Not even," as Bessie's sister says, "to eat their dinner properly."

On their way home, Fanny said, "Now, dear, tell me some more of your last night's doings."

"There is not much time," said Bessie, "so I will begin at once. Well, then, dear, a certain young lady, whom you know, went to spend the evening with her bosom friend, who happened to turn out very naughty and disagreeable,—a thing that does not often occur. The consequence was, that she left her friend earlier than usual, and took a walk; met a gentleman, and promised to meet him again this evening. Will that do for you?" said saucy Bessie.

"Now, dear, I do wish you would be serious. Do you really intend to meet this stranger to-night?"

"Really, Fanny, I do."

They had now reached the street where they must part for their respective homes, but they would meet again for the afternoon's work. The afternoon passed quickly. The school was closed with that pretty little hymn,—

"Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear us,
Bless Thy little lambs to-night;
Through the darkness be Thou near us,
Keep us safe till morning light.

"Through this day Thy hand has led us,
And we thank Thee for Thy care ;
Thou hast warmed, and clothed, and fed us,
Listen to our evening prayer.

"Let our sins be all forgiven,
Bless the friends we love so well ;
Take us, when we die, to heaven,
Happy there with Thee to dwell."

A short prayer followed, the children were dismissed, and our young friends were once more at liberty. They walk together as far as their path lies in the same direction, then Fanny tearfully bids Bessie Good-bye, saying, "I hope I shall have you to-morrow evening." Bessie felt sorry for her friend, but hurried home, had her tea, and then prepared the morrow's lessons, as they must be done before she is free to take her looked-for walk. It was nearly eight o'clock when Bessie put away her books and sallied forth. She is quickly met and welcomed by her new friend, Mr. St. Vincent.

CHAPTER V.

BERNARD'S SOLILOQUY.

THE first preliminary greetings and inquiries over, Bernard asked Bessie in what direction she would like to walk.

"To my favourite resort beside the sea. But I think I like the east part best: it is much quieter." And thither they bent their steps, and are soon so engrossed in earnest conversation that they heed not the distance they have walked, and the time passes all too rapidly for them.

Bernard said, "Particular business calls me to London to-morrow. I am very sorry, but I must go. Will you promise to meet me again the following evening? I shall then have something to look forward to. In the meantime, I have brought two or three books, which you may like to look over. Now, have I your promise?"

Bessie promised once more to meet Bernard, and thanking him for the books, the two parted.

Bernard walked slowly down the street. It was earlier than he cared to go home, although he had plenty to do. He wished to be up early, to get to town in good time. But he walked on thoughtfully, and seemed holding a conversation with himself.

What is he saying? "Do I love this girl, or is it only a passing fancy? Passing fancy, indeed,"—he spurns the thought of such a thing,—“at my time of life! I ought to know whether it is love or not. And—and—yes: I have come to the conclusion, strange as it may appear, that I do indeed love her.”

“But, Bernard St. Vincent, she is too young for you; at least, most folks would say so.”

“Can’t help it,” said Bernard, answering the supposed objection. “If I can win her I will. It was love at first sight, and no mistake. I shall have many obstacles to overcome, I have no doubt; and I can hardly expect her to love me just yet. She may do so eventually, as she certainly seemed pleased at our conversation, and evidently enjoyed her walk.”

I must just tell my readers here that this was not Bernard’s first love; for many years before he had a boyish attachment to a fair cousin. She in return loved him well, but her father insisted on her marrying an older and more wealthy suitor, which, in obedience to his commands, she did, and, consequently, was extremely unhappy.

Later on, Bernard was engaged to a lovely lady about his own age, but she was taken from him by death. Years had passed, and so it happened that at the time he met Bessie his heart was free; and now, as he observed to himself, when a man at my age falls in love, it is such love that will go through any trials or difficulties in order to obtain the object of its devotion. But if Bernard could have looked into the future, I think he would have shrunk back in dismay: he little knew what fiery trials awaited him.

We think sometimes we should like to know what our future lot in life may be. But, dear friends, our Father doeth all things well, and in His infinite goodness and mercy the future is veiled from our sight. But as our trials or joys come, God will, if we ask Him, give us strength to bear them; for He has promised, "That as our days, so shall our strength be." And if we can say with David, "The Lord is my light and my salvation," we can likewise ask with him, "Of whom or what shall we be afraid?" Oh, if we can but trust our God and Father, and say, in the words of a well-known hymn,

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step's enough for me,"

how comfortable and happy we may feel!

And this brings to my mind another beautiful hymn, by Miss Wareing,—

“Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me ;
And the changes that will surely come
I do not fear to see :
I ask Thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.

“I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do,
Or secret thing to know ;
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go.

“I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And wipe the weeping eyes ;
A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize.

“So I ask Thee for the daily strength,
To none that ask denied,
And a mind to blend with outward life
While keeping at Thy side ;
Content to fill a little space,
If Thou be glorified.”

But we have left Bernard alone all this time. Now he thinks he had better go home, for he has a hard day's work before him on the morrow.

Bessie, after she left Bernard, hastened to her own room, and there opened the little package containing the books Bernard had brought for her.

But she felt too unsettled to care about books that night, so she carefully laid them aside, thinking she would have more time on the morrow. She did not feel quite satisfied with herself: she knew her friends would condemn her conduct when they heard of it. And we, dear readers, though we may not wish to be too hard on her, must condemn likewise her imprudent acts. In this instance, Bernard St. Vincent was an honourable man, and had really fallen in love with the young girl. Had it been otherwise, to what dangers would Bessie have been exposed!

CHAPTER VI.

A DAY IN LONDON.

HAVE you ever been placed in the awkward predicament of having so much to do that you scarcely know how to make a beginning? Well, Bernard felt something similar, he wanted to do so much in this one day.

He arrived in town in good time, and set about business in good earnest. He was no idler, and fully endorsed the saying of the wise man: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." It was, indeed, with him what the children sing sometimes,—

"Work while you work, and play while you play."

Bernard had been hither and thither in the whirl of the great city, and the time was rapidly passing; so much so, that he feared he would not be able to visit his parents. He took out his watch, and seemed calculating the time. "Ah, I thought so: I shall only about have time to catch Edmund

before he leaves his office, and then I shall learn all the particulars about those at home."

Thinking thus, he walked briskly in the direction of Finsbury Pavement, called at the office, and found his brother, and soon learned from him all the news respecting family matters. The two brothers then began telling each other of their private affairs, and Edmund seemed much amused at Bernard's late experiences with Bessie. He laughed heartily, but did not believe that his brother was so smitten as he seemed to imagine, but thought the fancy would soon wear off.

This brother, I must tell you, was about eight years younger than Bernard, and was at this time a general lover; in fact, he had no intention at present of making any matrimonial alliance. After he had composed himself a little, he began asking Bernard more questions.

"How old is she?"

Bernard did not know exactly, but he told him what he thought.

"Rather young for you," said Edmund, trying to look very grave. "But I expect to be in Brinybeach very shortly, when I hope I shall have the pleasure of an introduction; for I must confess I feel rather anxious to see the young lady who seems to have taken your heart by storm."

Bernard said he must go; and Edmund declared

his intention of having as much of his brother's company as possible, so he accompanied him. More pleasantries passed, and then Edmund said "Good bye. Now don't be down-hearted, old fellow. I wish you every success in winning the lady's love, if you think it essential to your happiness." There was no time for more,—the train began to move; and Bernard, as he was being whirled back again, felt fully determined that he would win Bessie's love, if possible.

CHAPTER VII.

“‘VIRGIL,’ I DO DECLARE.”

FANNY looked anxiously at Bessie when they met the next morning, as if she thought by so doing she could understand her friend's movements.

“Well, Bessie,” she at length asked, “what news?”

“The news is this, that I am coming to spend the evening with you.”

“Oh, I am glad of that. So you are not going to run away any more.”

“Not so fast, not so fast, Fanny dear. I did not say that much, for, indeed, I expect to see Mr. St. Vincent again to-morrow. And perhaps you will not feel extremely flattered when I tell you why it is I am not going to see him this evening: he has gone to London, on business of importance, I believe.”

“And there I hope he will stay a long time,” quickly responded Fanny, “and not come back

and take you away. But I am very glad, anyhow, to get you again for a little while; and if Mr. St. Vincent does return, why, I think I am beginning to feel enough curiosity to wish for an "introduction."

"Which you shall have; for I should like to know what you think of him."

And so they arranged that as soon as possible Fanny should be introduced to Bernard.

The day passed quietly and happily, like many others, with

"The daily round, the common task,"

and the young friends were once more at liberty. They hurry to their respective homes, and after tea, Bessie sallies forth to spend the evening with Fanny, as arranged. They bring out their books; but I think there was more talking than reading on the present occasion. They spent a pleasant time together, and then Bessie took her solitary walk home.

Once again in her own room, she thought of the books Bernard had brought for her inspection, so she settled herself to look through them.

"Vol. I., poetry. Yes: that is nice. I like poetry. But I am not going to read to-night, so don't tempt me: I want to look at the others.

"Vol. II., poetry again. Why, I should think

Mr. St. Vincent must be fond of poetry. But what have I here in this neat-looking little vol.? 'Virgil,' I do declare!" and Bessie goes off into a fit of laughter.

"Only to think of that, now. Oh, Mr. Bernard" St. Vincent, I am not so clever as you seem to imagine."

And Bessie laughingly laid the volume aside, and took up the remaining one. It did not seem to interest her particularly, so it was soon put aside with the rest. And then she sat thoughtfully for some time.

"I do not know what it is," she said to herself; "but I am feeling very lonely. I think I am beginning to want my dear mother home sadly. but she will not be coming just yet, so I must make myself as happy as I can without her. Well, I think I had better go to bed, and try and not think any more to-night." Which she accordingly did.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. AMBROSE.

AT the hour appointed for Bessie to meet Bernard, Fanny walked with her friend, as agreed, in order to see him. They were soon met by that gentleman, and Fanny was duly introduced. Bernard did not seem greatly surprised to see this young lady, as he had already heard of her from Bessie. The trio walked on, chatting pleasantly ; but Bernard, in his own mind, hoped Fanny would let him have Bessie a little while to himself, which Fanny seemed to understand, for she turned in the direction of her home, and Bernard and Bessie accompanied her part of the way.

Fanny watched Bernard very closely, and looked as if she were trying to divine his thoughts. He seemed quite unconscious of it, and talked in his easy, pleasant way ; so much so, that Fanny became quite talkative for her, being generally very shy in the company of strangers.

At length they wish Fanny Good night, and Bernard and Bessie are once more alone.

"I like your young friend very well, but I was wanting you alone: I have so many things to tell you."

"Indeed," said Bessie: "go on, then, and let me hear all the news!"

"But what have you been doing? Have you looked at the books I brought you?"

Bessie answered, demurely, she had not had time to read any yet. She had only glanced at the title pages.

Then Bernard told Bessie some of the things he wished her to know; likewise about his brother Edmund, and his promised visit. And then he anxiously inquired when Bessie expected her parents home. He felt rather uneasy, in case they should forbid the young girl meeting him any more.

As usual, the time passed so rapidly that they hurried somewhat, so that Bessie might not be late home. He obtained her promise to meet him again, and so for the present he must rest satisfied. After bidding Bessie adieu, Bernard walked along, rather slowly and thoughtfully, in the direction of his home. He was so preoccupied that he did not perceive a gentleman advancing smilingly towards him. Not until the gentleman

stepped in front of him did Bernard look up, and perceived an old friend,—Mr. Ambrose. That gentleman raised his hat, and made a mock deferential bow ; but the next instant grasped his friend's hand, and said, "I am so glad—so very glad—to see you again, dear General (a cognomen by which Bernard was known among some of his friends). Only last evening I was making inquiries about you, and Mr. Murly said he could not think where our old friend had got to."

"It is not so very long ago we met, Ambrose," replied Bernard. "But I must tell you I was in London yesterday."

"Yes, dear General, but the night before that, and before that! You have been playing truant," and he looked knowingly at his friend. "Ah, you see a little secret has just been whispered to me, only this very evening! Now, surely you are not going to forsake old friends quite: are you?"

"No: I hope not," Bernard answered. "But you certainly will not see so much of me as you have done: that I promise you."

"Now really, dear General, you must enlighten me a little more."

Bernard would have been glad to have got home, but his friend seemed reluctant to part from him again so soon. So we will leave them to make their confidences alone.

CHAPTER IX.

FANNY'S ADVICE.

THE following morning Fanny determined to call for Bessie much earlier than usual, as she wished for a little quiet conversation with her friend, respecting Mr. St. Vincent, and did not want to lose any time about it.

Bessie was ready, however, for she was anxious to hear Fanny's opinion of Bernard.

After the usual greetings, Bessie led the way for the conversation by suddenly exclaiming, "Now then, dear, tell me what you think of my new friend, Mr. St. Vincent!"

"Well, you see, dear Bessie," began Fanny, slowly, "I set out with a great deal of prejudice: I felt determined not to like him. I thought, How can I like him? It was not nice to take Bessie off like that. And now, in spite of myself, I like him."

"Oh, I am very glad of that," said Bessie, "because you will not blame me so much!"

"Now, dear," continued Fanny, "I believe he loves you truly and sincerely."

"Yes: I know,—excuse my interrupting you, Bessie,—I know what you are going to say: no declaration of love has been made. That I know. But that Mr. St. Vincent intends to follow up what he has begun I feel fully persuaded, or I am no judge of character. Now then, Bessie, if you are only doing this for fun and pastime, I beseech you give it up at once. I can scarcely believe you have given it any serious consideration. Now, dear, do take my advice, and tell Mr. St. Vincent, when you see him again, that you cannot meet him any more."

"Oh, dear Fanny, I cannot! You do not know how persuasive he can be."

"Well," answered Fanny, "I dare say he is. I think he must have fallen in love with you directly he saw you. I have heard people talk of love at first sight, but I had not much faith in it. However, I believe he is genuine, and too good to be played with. So, dear, if you cannot tell him at once that you will meet him no more, you are not obliged to meet him every evening: now, are you?"

"I will consider what you say, Fanny; and,

perhaps, after all, it would be best. I will try and convince him this very evening that I am much too busy to take such frequent walks; although, I can assure you, Fanny, it is very pleasant to have a nice walk, and a companion that is so clever: that is to say, well informed on general subjects. He can tell me pretty nearly everything I may ask. And I do think we have remained indoors too much: I am sure the sea air is delicious."

"Well, my dear, of course you could still have a walk when you liked it; but I think it would be wrong of you to carry on a flirtation with this gentleman. Besides, we have a great deal to do, and we shall soon be leaving Brinybeach. But here we are again at school. I am afraid we have somewhat loitered, as there seems a goodly number of children assembled, and they are waiting for us, and appear to be looking anxiously for the arrival of their teachers."

Willing little feet soon ran and fetched the keys of the school; and that now opened, the group of youngsters were allowed to enter and take their seats.

There was no more leisure just now: both Bessie and Fanny were fully occupied until twelve o'clock.

As they were going home again, Fanny asked Bessie to think over what she had said to her in the morning.

"Anybody would think you were years older than I am," said Bessie, laughing. "However, I will think about it." And so she did. And then she began holding converse with herself: "I wonder what Fanny knows about these things. Why, she is not quite so old as I am! Well, yes: that is true. But, on the other hand, she is not so giddy and thoughtless; therefore, I suppose, her advice ought to have some weight." So Bessie made up her mind that she would tell Bernard in the evening that she would not be able to meet him on the following day.

According to promise, Bessie met Bernard in the evening; but what she had to tell him seemed to make her more serious than was her wont.

Bernard noticed something was amiss; however, as they proceeded on their walk, she became more animated.

A gentleman passed them, who raised his hat and bowed very politely to Bessie.

She acknowledged the bow, but with such a conscious look on her face, that it betrayed the secret that these two were more than ordinarily interested in each other. My readers will have, perhaps, guessed that it was Mr. Carlton.

"Now, then," thought Bernard, "here is a rival I was not aware of."

Bessie explained to Bernard, as he looked

inquiringly at her, that she knew the gentleman very well, that he was a teacher in a school near the one she was engaged in.

And then Bernard tried to interest her in other topics; and, of course, at parting, asked if he might have the pleasure of meeting her again on the morrow.

Bessie explained she would not be able to come.

Bernard felt rather desperate. He thought it was meeting that young fellow that caused Bessie to change her mind, so he answered, "Do try and come again to-morrow. I should like to see you so very much, if you could make it convenient."

"I cannot: indeed I cannot see you to-morrow," said Bessie, firmly.

"Well," said her companion, in a determined tone, "I must see you, and will do so, if possible."

"But I tell you," repeated Bessie, impatiently, "I cannot come."

"I quite understand you now, Miss Lester," said Bernard, quietly, "but that does not alter my intention of seeing you. But you will meet me the following evening: will you not? That will seem a very long time for me to wait."

Bessie, having given a formal consent, hurried indoors, and was thinking over what Bernard had said, "that he would see her to-morrow." She said to herself, "No, Mr. Bernard St. Vincent, you shall

not see me to-morrow, if I can help it. I will not even go out to Fanny's in the evening : if she wants to be with me she will have to come here." In the morning she told Fanny how she had arranged, and that young lady agreed to come to Bessie's home to spend the evening : she felt quite pleased with her friend for trying so soon, as she thought, to break off their meetings. But little did either of the girls know of Bernard's persistency of character. But you shall hear what he did.

He had been pondering over the best means of seeing Bessie. At last he hit upon a plan that he thought would do. He knew the route she took to school ; so, when it was nearly two o'clock, he started, and had the satisfaction of seeing Bessie, though at some little distance, as he did not wish her to see him then. He watched her till she had entered the school, he then turned and walked in the direction of the downs ; but the attraction laid in the opposite direction, so he retraced his steps, and once more the school building was in sight. He walked nearer : he knew that building hid from his sight the lady of his love ; but it was gratifying, nevertheless, to be so near.

All unconscious of Bernard's close proximity, Bessie was standing before her class, side-face to that very window under which Bernard was now standing. She was giving a lesson.

A sudden irresistible impulse seized Bernard, and with a boy's activity he played a boyish trick of mounting the window. He peeped, little thinking how well he would be compensated for the venture.

Several pairs of little twinkling eyes glanced up at the window as the shadow fell across them. The teacher looked likewise to see what had attracted her scholars. Their eyes met for an instant, and a tell-tale blush suffused brow and neck. Bessie was standing with her back to Miss Calthrop, who was writing at a table near.

The sudden cessation of Bessie's lesson caused the mistress to look up; but Bessie quietly resumed her talking, and no further notice was taken. Although Miss Calthrop had not seen the gentleman at the window, another keen pair of eyes had, and noted it accordingly. Of course Bessie did not meet Mr. St. Vincent that day; though she could not help being rather amused at the way in which he had managed to see her.

CHAPTER X.

OLD FRIENDS MEET.

A MORNING or two after the events recorded in the last chapter, Mr. Carlton managed to meet Bessie, but not alone. There was no possibility of speaking to Bessie by herself, she was always most provokingly attended by her friend Fanny, for whom he entertained no partiality, for he knew she had not in the least favoured his suit.

“Good morning, young ladies,” said Mr. Carlton, bowing most politely. “I hope you are well.”

He scarcely gave them time to reply before he continued, but the tone of his voice showed his annoyance, and both girls looked at him searchingly,—

“What inseparable friends you are! But, by the by, Bessie, you had another companion the other evening.”

Then, turning to Fanny, he said,—

"However did you let Bessie go for a walk without you?"

Fanny answered him not, as the tone in which he spoke made her feel angry.

Mr. Carlton resumed his conversation with Bessie.

"May I ask who was your companion the other evening?"

"A gentleman," answered Bessie, coolly.

"Yes, yes: you teasing girl, I know that. Will not your ladyship deign to give me a little more information?"

"Well," answered Bessie, with equal coolness, "seeing you are an old friend, I do not mind telling you just a little more. The gentleman in question is called Mr. Bernard St. Vincent. Now, is not that a pretty name?"

"Who is he? How long have you known him?"

"Not so fast, Mr. Carlton, please. I cannot answer so many questions at once: you quite take away my breath," said the girl, laughing at his discomfiture. "Here we are at school; and here, likewise, comes a lady you like so very much, Mr. Carlton. I think we had better wish you Good morning."

The colour mounted to the young man's face; but, raising his hat to Miss Calthrop as she passed, he quickly hurried on his way, feeling anything but pleased with Bessie's manner.

Miss Calthrop felt exceedingly annoyed when she saw Mr. Carlton in conversation with the girls. She had hoped that all the nonsense had terminated between him and Bessie. She could not help remarking to that young lady, after the usual greeting was over, "I hope, Bessie dear, you are not going to let Mr. Carlton get round you again. I really thought this affair was quite done with."

"The meeting with him this morning was quite accidental," answered Bessie.

Miss Calthrop did not say any more to her, and school work commenced.

Bessie could not help thinking, that if she were so put out about Mr. Carlton, how would she be when she heard about Mr. Bernard St. Vincent?

Bessie still continued to meet Bernard pretty frequently, and gossiping tongues were already at work, making up, conjecturing, and surmising all sorts of things concerning them, and looking forward to the time when Mrs. Lester should return, so that they might pour into her ears the information they were so anxious and willing to impart about her naughty daughter and her admirer.

Bessie, too, is anxious for her parents' return, and hopes they will not delay it much longer.

"Eight o'clock," said Bessie, with a sigh of relief; and she closed her book. "Now, then, for a walk."

After carefully putting her books away, she dressed, and walked quickly to the place where she expected to meet Bernard. It was rather later than usual, and she fully expected he would be waiting for her.

"But what is this? Bernard not here?" She hesitated, and waited a minute or two, then said to herself, "You are late, Mr. Bernard St. Vincent, and I am not going to wait for you, I am sure."

Just as she came to this conclusion, a friend passed, and the two began chatting gaily.

"Were you expecting to meet your friend, Miss Lester?"

"Yes, I was; but he is late, and I was just going home, for I did not intend to wait for him."

"Something, no doubt, has detained him. But let us walk a little way; it is a long time since I have had a talk with you."

Poor Bernard arrived shortly after his lady-love had quitted the spot. He waited patiently and hopefully, thinking Bessie had not been yet, as it was not so very much past the appointed time; but, as he continued to wait, he began to fear that she must have been, and left before he arrived.

Nine o'clock! Bernard began to despair of seeing Bessie at all, when, happening to look up, he saw her coming from another direction with a gentleman.

Bessie wished Mr. Yarrow Good evening, saying, as she did so, "I need not trouble you to come any farther with me, as I see my friend waiting for me."

Bernard was very glad to have Bessie again by his side, if only for a few minutes. He knew there was no time left this evening for a walk, so he only had the satisfaction of seeing her home.

Bessie simply told him "He was late, and that she would not wait."

CHAPTER XI.

WE MET AT A FRIEND'S HOUSE TO TEA.

A FORTNIGHT had passed away, and Edmund St. Vincent paid the promised visit to his brother Bernard. He made many inquiries concerning Miss Lester, and was greatly surprised to find that his brother was still as much in love with her as ever.

"I told Miss Lester you were coming, Edmund, and that I should like her to see you. Mrs. Neather said she would give her a pressing invitation to meet us both at her house to tea on Sunday evening; but I am not sure that Bessie will accept it, as I know she is in the habit of attending church. But I hope she will come, or you may not have an opportunity of judging her character. You see, Edmund, I have not been to her home yet, as both her father and mother are at present in the country."

The invitation was duly given, and, as Bernard

seemed anxious she should accept it, Bessie did so. Sunday arrived: it rained most incessantly, the wind blew in violent gusts, the sea roared and the waves dashed about wildly; altogether it seemed more pleasant to be under friendly shelter than exposed to the raging elements. But what cared Bernard for wind or rain, so long as he could be near Bessie? and although the weather was so unpropitious, he still thought she would come to Mrs. Neather's, as she only resided a few doors distant. They were anxiously awaiting her arrival; but Bessie did not appear, so Mrs. Neather sent Miss Don Savant to escort her, for she saw the gentlemen began to fear Bessie would not come. She came, however, and they all passed a very pleasant evening, notwithstanding the unpleasant atmosphere outside.

When it was time for Bessie to go, Bernard accompanied her. Taking any walk this evening was quite out of the question, for it still rained heavily; but Bernard felt happy, for he expected to meet Bessie alone on the morrow. So, having seen her safely indoors, he returned to Mrs. Neather's for his brother. During their walk home, the conversation, of course, turned upon Miss Lester.

"Now, what do you think of her?" asked Bernard.

"Oh," said Edmund, coolly, "very nice, very charming, I have no doubt. But you know,

Bernard, she would not be exactly in my line: she is several shades too quiet and serious to please me."

"I like her all the better for that very thing: she can talk sensibly to you. I do not mean to say she cannot enjoy a little fun, too, sometimes. But you know, Edmund, as well as I do, that some young ladies are satisfied with any amount of small talk and flatteries, and directly you broach any sensible conversation, they are mute; at least, it has been my lot, lately, to be thrown among that class; and Miss Lester seemed so unlike those I have been describing, that I suppose the novelty charmed me."

Edmund replied, thoughtfully, "She is not exactly the sort of girl I should have thought would have taken a walk with a stranger."

"No: she is not," said Bernard. "It seemed so very strange we should have met; for it appears she very seldom took a walk, and very rarely was alone. But there was some slight misunderstanding between herself and friend on the special evening of our meeting, that caused her to take a ramble by herself; and she was on her way home when Miss Don Savant accosted her, and then kindly, I may say, and without much ceremony, left us together."

"Do you still," asked Edmund, "intend to

follow up your original intention of winning her love?"

"I do," said Bernard, emphatically.

"And will you marry her?" Edmund asked.

"I will: that is, if she will have me."

Edmund goes on: "Are you prepared to stand the scorn, anger, and condemnation you are likely to meet with? You must know neither of our parents would approve of such a marriage; and our mother, most of all, I am afraid, would be most seriously displeased. For myself, I am sure I do not mind whom you marry, so long as you please yourself and are happy. And I do not think our sisters would mind, either; but I am thinking you might find it extremely awkward to be one religion and Miss Lester another. By the by, Bernard, does she know that you are a Jew?"

"I cannot say," answered Bernard: "I have not told her; and, indeed, the subject of religion has not been discussed. I believe she took it for granted that I went to church. Well, so I do sometimes; for I like to hear a good sermon."

Edmund only laughed at this folly, as he called it. Much more was said on both sides; but we will leave them to themselves, while we enlighten our readers a little more as to the feelings and views of Bernard.

CHAPTER XII.

LINES BY BERNARD.

BERNARD had stated a fact to Edmund when he said that religion had not been the theme of any conversations with Bessie. She, therefore, had not the slightest idea that Mr. St. Vincent was not only a Jew by birth, but had been educated according to the strict tenets of that faith.

Bessie had been brought up religiously: had, when quite young, attended Sunday School; and, indeed, she would think it very wrong of any one not to attend a place of worship. There had been no real change in Bessie's heart, though attending most carefully to religious duties. When asked once by Bernard if she ever went to the theatre, she answered, "Oh, no: I have never been to an entertainment of that sort in my life. A concert or a lecture is a great deal more to my taste."

Bernard answered, "I am very glad to hear it. I am sure I should never persuade you to go to a theatre."

You see, dear readers, she was strictly moral; but yet, alas, was not a Christian, in the full acceptance of the term—only one in name.

Bernard, on the other hand, had been trained in most orthodox Judaism, and for a time he was thoroughly consistent; but of late years doubts had crept into his mind, and at the time he met Bessie, he was not following out his creed to the letter, as he had been trying to do formerly. He frequently went to hear some of the eminent preachers of the day.

About two years before he met Bessie, he was laid up with a very serious illness. Perhaps you will better understand his religious feelings if I quote some lines he wrote at this date, which he entitled

"CONSOLATION TO THE AFFLICTED.

"One thing is certain, if all else were doubt,
That God doth rule the universe throughout;
That One, who can, and does rule all so right,
Must be a Being of tremendous might;
A Being perfect, past compare, and good.
By few His wondrous ways are understood;
Who does, who ever did, and yet will reign
So long as His creation shall remain;
Who was, who is, and evermore will be,
Unchanged through eras of eternity.

Governed are all His creatures by just laws,
And none allowed to suffer without cause ;
Though to some mortals it is not so clear,
The why and wherefore of their sufferings here.
Many imagine, who from duty swerve,
That they are punished more than they deserve,
And rashly think it little use to try
To please that Being who doth dwell on high,
Since all their earnest efforts seem in vain,
And are rewarded but by grief and pain.
Yet those forlorn ones who imagine this,
How little can they dream of future bliss,
Nor fancy, even much less can they know,
The happy end of some unhappy woe !
For all the pangs we suffer are but sent
To make us forsake evil and repent ;
To make us pause between our sinful ways,
That we may not be wicked all our days :
For some there are so thoughtlessly inclined,
That seldom solemn thoughts engage their mind,
Unless by grief and sickness they're laid low,
Then, more of Divine mercy they would know.
Alas, but scarcely does their health return,
Than they forget what then they wished to learn !
And so pursue the tenor of their way ;
Again grow careless, again go astray.
Next time the chastisement is more severe,
It longer lasts, and leads them on to fear.
Sometimes this bringeth the desired end ;
Sometimes the mind too stubborn is to bend.
Happy are they who yield to mild reproof,
And never from good counsel keep aloof ;
While melancholy is indeed their fate
Who will not patiently through trials wait,
Who feel rebellious, and as they grow worse,
What is their destiny ! in vain they curse.
For surely the Almighty must know best
When to afflict, and when to let us rest.
Presumptuous mortals, think it is not right,
Because that others' lots appear more bright !

How can that be, for sure that Judge sublime
 Perfection is in judgment and Divine?
 And not alone that this is strictly true,
 But with His judgment blends soft mercy too.
 Whatever ills that we are doomed to bear,
 Let resignation be our constant care ;
 And if we bear them in submissive mood,
 Then rest assured that evils lead to good.
 Most certainly it never can be right
 To think that God afflicts for His delight ;
 And when acknowledged that this is not true,
 What other motive can He have in view,
 But this beloved one? It is very plain
 He to Himself would turn our hearts again,
 And thus arrest us in our wayward track,
 From wrong paths to the right one bring us back ;
 The only one, though many more are given,—
 The only one by which we can reach heaven.
 What, in proportion, can our time here be,
 When balanced there by immortality?
 It little matters what we here endure,
 So as we there eternal bliss secure."

In all these lines you may see that Bernard had faith and confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God ; but he had not been brought to see that Jesus was the promised Messiah—the End of the Law—the Lamb promised from the foundation of the world.

And now, as his brother Edmund had reminded him about religion, and about Bessie being different to himself in that respect, he felt rather uneasy ; but, as he thought over it, he came to the conclusion that he would risk offending all his friends sooner than lose Bessie.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. LESTER.

“**A** LETTER! a letter!” cried Bessie, at breakfast one morning. “I am so very glad. Oh, Marion, mother writes to say she will be home, she hopes, to-morrow: let me see, that must mean to-day. I am glad, for I am getting tired of coming home and not finding her here.”

“I am sure I am quite as glad as you are,” answered Marion (Bessie’s sister). “I am tired of the responsibility, especially of you, Bessie, you tiresome girl. Why, yesterday Mrs. Pellam was telling me——”

“There, there, do please stop, Marion: I do not wish to hear what she was telling you; for I know what a gossip she is.”

And Bessie hurried away to get ready for school.

“I say, Marion; if the dear little mother should arrive while I am away, you will let her rest a little

while before you tell her of the shocking behaviour of her darling Bessie. Now, will you not?"

And with this parting shaft, Bessie was gone, leaving Marion very vexed with her gay young sister. Bessie hurried home at dinner time; but no mother had arrived, and she felt rather disappointed, but thought she must have patience a little longer, for in all probability she would find her there when she returned at tea time.

Mr. and Mrs. Lester, with their youngest daughter, Rosalie, and their youngest child, a boy of about twelve years of age, of whom Bessie was exceedingly fond, arrived during the afternoon.

Mr. Lester was a tall, well-built, and still handsome man; but beyond his daily avocation, he did not trouble himself much with any family matters. He had every confidence in his little wife, that she understood most about those things; consequently, nearly all the care and responsibility fell upon the mother.

Mrs. Lester was quite unlike her daughter Bessie in many respects, for she was altogether a diminutive little body, rather dark, very active and pleasant, and was possessed of an exceedingly good temper. She loved her husband and children dearly. She was a kind and indulgent mother: yea, somewhat too indulgent; for, as the naughty

Bessie often said, "She could soon win the dear little mother to her way of thinking."

And on the present occasion Bessie thought to herself, "If I can have a talk with mother alone, and give her my version of my doings before any one else can tell her about it, I shall make it all right; if she is not too tired I should like her to know to-night, for she is almost sure to have some of those dreadful gossips coming to see her in the morning: they are sure to deem it their duty to take the earliest opportunity of acquainting my mother with what they know of my late proceedings, and I have not the least doubt they will colour it highly for her benefit."

Bessie was delighted on reaching home in the afternoon to find they had arrived. She was affectionately greeted by all, and then exclaimed: "Oh, I am so glad to see you again, you dear little mother; and you, too, you dear, great big father; and you, dear Rosalie; and my darling little brother Harry." Then she sobered down a little and had tea, but laughed and chatted merrily all the time.

After tea, Bessie found herself alone with her mother, so she availed herself of the opportunity, and told her all that was upon her mind. As Bessie went on, her mother looked very grave, for she was a sincere Christian woman, and she

trembled for her darling child. But as Bessie proceeded with her story, Mrs. Lester felt somewhat reassured. She knew her daughter Bessie was wilful at times, and very thoughtless; but she would not be harsh with her: she would be tender, and kind, and try to lead her into the right path. A silent prayer ascended from her heart on behalf of her darling child.

After some further conversation, Bessie prepared to go out.

"Where are you going, my dear?" asks her mother.

"I promised, mother dear, to meet Mr. St. Vincent and he will be waiting; but I will not stay away long. When I promised him last evening, I did not know you would be home. But I am sure he will be very glad to hear you have arrived; for I know he wishes to see you."

Bessie hastened to the place of meeting, and found Mr. St. Vincent waiting for her. She soon told him her news. "And now," said she, "you will not wish to detain me this evening: will you?"

"I might wish to do so," exclaimed Bernard; "but I will not, as it was very good of you to come at all, under the circumstances. When do you think I may have the pleasure of seeing your parents?"

"I do not know. Shall I find out and tell you to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes, if you will: for the sooner I can see them the better!"

"But I must be going now, for I told my mother I should not be away long this evening; so good-bye." And Bessie skipped lightly indoors, leaving Bernard earlier than usual to his own reflections.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOSSIPS.

“GOOD-BYE, mother dear.”

The mother looked up lovingly and admiringly at her bright-eyed, merry girl.

“But just one word before I go. Let me see,” said Bessie, counting upon her fingers. “Number one, Mrs. Flannagan; number two, Mrs. Pellam; number three, Mrs. Dorling. I really pity you, mother dear; for I feel sure you will have to bear the infliction of visits from all these gossips, in order to inform you of the shocking, shocking doings of your beloved daughter. Now, just one word of counsel: don’t be too patient and enduring with them, or they will tire you to death. I wish they would say to me what they have to say; but there, they know better than that: however, they will be sure to deem it their ‘dooty,’ as they call it, to make you acquainted with all the interesting news. So good-bye.”

As Bessie passed up the street she glanced in the direction in which these worthies resided.

"Oh, I thought so!" said Bessie to herself. "You are on the look out, are you? to see I am well out of the way before you venture to call."

"Marion dear," asks Mrs. Lester. "Have you seen this gentleman of whom Bessie has been telling me?"

"I have not spoken to him," replied Marion; "but I have seen him in the street several times. I believe he has some property here, and he sometimes, I know, calls upon Mrs. Neather. But I think, mother dear, he looks a great deal too old for our Bessie, and I think you ought to put a stop to it at once."

"I am sure, Marion, I do not know what to do for the best: the girl is continually being sought after by one or another. I am beginning to think I should be somewhat relieved now if she really had a good, kind, and loving husband."

"But I thought you were very anxious Bessie should go to college."

The conversation is here interrupted. A rat-tat at the door. Mrs. Flannagan is announced.

"Welcome home, dear Mrs. Lester. I am so glad to see you again; but you look rather tired and weary."

"Thank you: yes, I do feel so," said the gentle

little woman. She innocently thought, if she admitted that, the lady would not prolong her visit.

But Mrs. Flannagan had no intention of beating a retreat, so she continued,—

“Well, do you know, I feel greatly relieved, for I was beginning to feel very anxious about your Bessie. Of course she has told you somewhat, I suppose, of the conquest she has made during your absence. Now you know, dear Mrs. Lester, I do not wish to interfere in family matters; but it is really kindness and love to your daughter prompted me to come and speak to you about it.” The lady continued: “The gentleman is much older, and, I should think, in quite a different position in life; therefore it is very improbable that he intends to carry on his attentions to marriage. I do trust you will excuse the liberty I have taken in hinting the subject to you. I think if I were you I would question my daughter, and get at the bottom of it all.”

“I thank you, Mrs. Flannagan, for your disinterested advice. But there is no need for me to question my child: she has already told me all about it.”

“And what do you intend doing, may I ask?”

As politely as possible, Mrs. Lester told her that she did not feel called upon to enter into particulars.

At which Mrs. Flannagan felt somewhat offended, and shortly after left the house.

"Oh, my dear Bessie!" soliloquized Mrs. Lester. "How you have given occasion to gossiping tongues!"

She had hardly recovered from this visitor, when Mrs. Pellam came in. "And now," thought Mrs. Lester, "here is another gossip to bear with. I wonder what she will have to say."

"Good morning, Mrs. Lester," said the lady, in as bland a voice as she could assume. "I am very glad to see you at home once more, and I must say I think it is quite time. It is almost a pity you could not have taken your daughter Bessie with you."

Mrs. Lester answered, wilfully misunderstanding the lady,—

"Bessie would have been very glad of the change, and I should have liked it much; but then you know, Mrs. Pellam, Bessie is engaged in school work, and could not leave."

"Oh, I did not mean I thought the young lady required change of air, but that she would have been kept out of danger."

"What do you mean, Mrs. Pellam?"

"Why, this is what I mean, that she has been galivanting with a strange gentleman she knows nothing of. Now, that does not look well: does it? And she a teacher too."

"Is that all you have to tell me?" inquired the much-enduring little woman. "Why, Mrs. Flannagan has taken the trouble already this morning to tell me of the same thing. I suppose I ought to feel very much obliged for the interest on my behalf."

"Mrs. Flannagan got the start of me, did she? Well, I do not think she knew the little bit of information I can give you, for I have some very important news. Mrs. Dorling and I were talking about Miss Lester yesterday, and she said, 'What do you think, Mrs. Pelham? I was in conversation with Miss Reubens, the silversmith's daughter,' who is a Jewess, you know, of course, and your Bessie happened to pass, 'and she asked me if I knew that young lady.'"

"'Yes: of course I do.'"

"'Have you seen her walking lately with a gentleman?'"

"'To be sure I have.'"

"'Do you know him?' she asks."

"'No: I cannot exactly say I do.'"

"'Well,' she continued, 'I will tell you. He is a Jew, and, therefore, it is not likely he will ever marry Miss Lester. Our people, as a rule, do not like intermarrying with Christians.'"

Mrs. Pellam looked now at Mrs. Lester, to see what effect this news would have upon her, for she

knew Mrs. Lester was a religious woman. Poor Mrs. Lester was a great deal surprised and shocked, but tried not to let this gossip see her discomfiture, if she could help it.

Mrs. Pellam retired, inwardly chuckling, as she thought, "I have given her a pill that will take her sometime to swallow." Then she hastened to call on her friend Mrs. Flannagan, who had not yet heard this piece of news about Bessie.

Left alone once more, Bessie's mother thought it over. Perhaps, after all, they have been misinformed, for Bessie did not even hint at such being the case.

"Perhaps," thought the mother, "Bessie does not know it, but I will try and not worry any more about it; for, in all probability, Mrs. Pellam misunderstood what she heard, for she is a dreadful gossip, and I do not think there is much foundation in the things these gossips tell you."

Mrs. Lester was interrupted in her reflections as Mrs. Dorling was then announced.

"Surely," thought Mrs. Lester, "my Bessie is as good as a witch, for she named these very three. Well, whatever may be said, I think she is very clever. She evidently understands character pretty well, having named these three."

Of course Mrs. Dorling soon found out that what she had come to say had all been forestalled, but

she tritely observed, "It was to me that Miss Reubens said Mr. St. Vincent was a Jew ; therefore, of course, she knew it was correct."

However, poor Mrs. Lester was getting so weary that I am afraid she did not give a very patient hearing to Mrs. Dorling ; and as soon as that lady had gone, Mrs. Lester made up her mind she would have a little walk, for she did not care to run the risk of any more visitors just yet.

Mrs. Dorling, the last gossip, joined the two former, and the trio comforted themselves over a little "sperrets ;" for, as they said, Mrs. Lester did not seem at all grateful for the information given, and which they had taken such pains to collect. The consequence was, they were feeling rather low ; and when that is the case, they observed, "There is nothing like a little sperrets for cheering one up." As they were about to separate at the door of Mrs. Flannagan's, they saw approaching a quiet, respectable-looking woman (a Mrs. Austen) ; and Mrs. Pellam remarked to her companions, "I'll jest ask Mrs. Austen something." So she accosted her with "I say, Mrs. Austen, don't your Billy go to that there school where Miss Lester is a teacher ?"

"He does," answered Mrs. Austen.

"Well, if I was you, now, I would not send my child where there was such a teacher."

Mrs. Austen replied, "I should be very sorry to

take my little boy away, for he loves his school, and, what is more, he loves his teacher dearly, who happens to be Miss Lester."

"Indeed," said the gossips.

And then they tried to make Mrs. Austen understand the dreadful character of the young lady. However, if they expected any sympathy from this poor woman, they soon found they would get none; for she only smiled and said, "Bless her heart! I, for one, should be delighted to hear that a real, good gentleman had fallen in love with her, and would make her his wife. I think any one almost would love Miss Lester."

"How can you say so?" exclaimed the gossips. "Why, she is as proud as proud can be."

"You think so, perhaps, because you do not know her; but I know. She is gentle, kind, and sweet tempered. When my little boy was ill she used to come and see him, and he was so pleased, and his little face would brighten up. Then she would talk so nicely to me that I was quite cheered and comforted. But if you ladies wish to know what the teacher is thought of, go to the school a little before the time for entering, and inquire of the mothers and children waiting there."

"All that is very well," said Mrs. Pellam, impatiently. "But what do you think her clergyman, the Rev. Snowden Richards, would say?"

"Ah, that is a happy thought, now. I have almost a mind to go and ask the revcrend gentleman to look after Miss Lester, and let him know some of her proceedings."

"I do not think you would receive any thanks for your information, for he thinks a great deal of Miss Lester." And Mrs. Austen wished them Good morning.

A little distance off she meets Mrs. Lester returning from her walk, who kindly made inquiries concerning herself and family. The poor woman said, "I am very glad indeed to know you are home again, for I fear your dear daughter has missed you sadly."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Lester: "I am afraid she has, for I have only received three visitors this morning (mentioning their names), in order to tell me things concerning my daughter, which have made me feel quite sad and weary."

"Oh, but you know, ma'am, those good ladies are such gossips that I am sure you need not worry over anything they say. She is a dear, kind young lady, and my little boy loves her dearly; and I do trust that, whenever she may marry, she will have a kind, loving husband."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Lester. "It is pleasing to hear that the children are fond of her."

And then the two went their separate ways.

You may rest assured there was plenty of gossip going on likewise among those who knew Bernard. One gentleman said to a friend, "How could Mr. St. Vincent have chosen such a juvenile?" This question, no doubt, partly arose from Bernard looking so much older than he really was; while, on the other hand, Bessie happened to look younger than her years, which made the disparity between them more marked. But I think enough has been said on the subject of gossips, so we will leave them to carry it on, if they wish, among themselves.

CHAPTER XV.

A QUESTION TO BE ASKED AND ANSWERED.

WHEN Bessie returned from school she found her mother quite exhausted from the worry and fatigue she had undergone in being compelled to listen to so much gossip. On a look of inquiry from Bessie, she said,—

“I cannot talk to you now, my dear: wait until the evening. I dare say by then I shall feel rested and more refreshed, and be better able to enter into conversation.”

So Bessie had to be content until later in the day. She hurried home from afternoon school, and told Fanny not to expect her in the evening, as she wanted a nice long time with her mother. As soon as tea was over Bessie said,—

“Now then, mother dear, what is it? I see by your looks you have something on your mind.”

“Well, yes, my dear, I have. I little thought

when you mentioned those three visitors this morning that they would all come."

"Oh, they did come, then," said Bessie, laughing. "Well, I never! I hope they feel better now, mother dear, now they are relieved of their budget; but, of course, you took no notice of their communications: did you?"

"Not much, my dear. Still there were two or three things made me feel uneasy. What do you think, Bessie? Miss Reubens told Mrs. Dorling that your new friend was a Jew."

"I do not believe it!" exclaimed Bessie, in great heat, and much astonished. "He does not look a bit like one." Then, cooling down a little, she continued, "And suppose he is: what of that, I should like to know? However, I'll ask him: that is a question which must be asked and answered when I see him presently."

"My dear, do not ask impertinent questions. If Mr. St. Vincent is sincere, I have no doubt he will tell you himself. But do you not think it would be advisable to tell your friend kindly that you cannot walk with him any more, as you have lessons and studies to attend to, in order to prepare for the examination? And really, my child, if you wish to succeed, and go to college for two years, you must not entangle yourself in any love affair."

Bessie was silent, but before she went out she said,—

"I shall ask Mr. St. Vincent that question, and I shall bring him to see you. Now, do not look alarmed, I shall soon be back. So good-bye, mother dear." And she tripped lightly away.

She met Bernard, and they were soon in animated conversation upon various topics, but Bessie suddenly made a plunge into the one that was uppermost in her mind.

"Bernie dear, are you a Jew?"

Bernard was greatly annoyed: not that it was his intention to try and keep it secret from Bessie, but he thought the time had not arrived for full explanations. And now to think Bessie should have heard it first from some gossips. He knew the Reubens' family well enough, and could easily imagine that, out of envy and malice, they would talk, in order that Bessie might hear of it; for, of course, they did not feel flattered that he should pass by the ladies of his own faith, and choose a Christian. Bernard then entered into some explanations with Bessie, and finished up by saying he hoped that she would not desert him, but try and make some arrangement for him to see her parents. So he said Good-bye, with the expectation of seeing her again on the morrow.

Next day Bessie informed her mother of her conversation with Mr. St. Vincent.

"Is he a Jew, then, my dear?" asked her mother.

"Well, yes, he is; but he meant to tell me, of course, only did not think there was any necessity to do so until he had seen you."

"But, my dear, I do not think you ought to continue this kind of thing. Do give it up, and pay undivided attention to your work."

"There, now, you listen to what everybody says, and then you talk to me like that. I will do just what I like. I will go out with him, in spite of all the old gossips. If they had not been so officious I might have quietly let Mr. St. Vincent go, but as you and all are against him, I won't."

"Come, my dear Bessie, do not get into a temper like that. I am sure I cannot say anything about the gentleman, as I do not know him; only you cannot get on with your studies if you are out walking and talking nonsense."

"He does not talk nonsense," replied Bessie, warmly.

At this her mother could not help laughing a little; and then Bessie laughed too, and her temper was restored to its usual equanimity.

"Bernard is coming for me this evening. Have I your permission to bring him in to see you?"

"Yes: if you really wish it."

No more was said on the present occasion; but when Bessie saw Bernard in the evening, and he inquired when he might expect to have the

pleasure of seeing her friends, she told him he might come then if he liked.

Of course he said he did like ; so accordingly he went home with her, and was introduced to her parents.

Mrs. Lester soon became interested in the gentleman, and a pleasant conversation ensued ; Mrs. Lester, however, adroitly interspersed in her remarks things about Bessie that she thought might have the effect of making Mr. St. Vincent think less of her daughter. But all to no purpose, for he found excuses for all her naughtiness. At length, after further conversation, Mr. and Mrs. Lester gave Bernard permission to visit Bessie as a friend, but thought that must suffice for the present.

"Well," thought Bernard, "so long as I am not forbidden to see Bessie, and take her out sometimes, I must be content, and wait patiently."

Bernard became a frequent visitor at Bessie's home, and his gentlemanly demeanour and superior, quiet ways soon won the heart of her gentle, loving mother, who, somehow, began to look upon him as belonging to them. Bessie's friend Fanny, finding that all her counsel was of no avail, quickly accepted the inevitable, and instead of losing her friend altogether, accepted Bernard as well ; so the three might often be seen together in the little

parlour in which we first made Bessie's and Fanny's acquaintance.

Mr. St. Vincent and Fanny agreed on one point in particular, and that was, that Bessie was the dearest girl in the world.

And all this time Miss Calthrop knew nothing of this affair. She thought sometimes how very trying and pre-occupied Bessie seemed, and wondered what had made her so. On looking over one of her exercises one morning she felt quite angry, and wrote something hurriedly at the bottom of the page. Bessie received it back, and curiously glanced at what was written. What she saw made the colour mount into her cheeks. It was this: "Several careless errors." And the word careless was underlined.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FLOWER SHOW.

ONE morning in September, as the teachers were gathered round Miss Calthrop, she said, "I have just received tickets of invitation, admitting about fifty of our elder children, with their teachers, to the flower show to-morrow."

"Oh, that is kind!" said the girls.

"Yes," continued Miss Calthrop: "I think it is very kind indeed of those gentlemen connected with it to interest themselves on behalf of the school children. It will be such a treat for them. And you see it is not our school alone, but all the other schools have likewise received invitations. I suppose you would like to go, Bessie."

"Thank you, Miss Calthrop, I should."

"And then I suppose Fanny would wish to go likewise. Now you see that is rather awkward, as

I think one of you two elder teachers ought to remain in school with the rest of the children."

"We will both stay in school, then," said Bessie and Fanny at once.

But to this Miss Calthrop would not agree. One of the other teachers then volunteered to remain, so it was eventually arranged that they both could go. When school duties were over for the day, the children were selected, and told to come dressed in their best on the following morning, that their teachers might take them to the flower show. The children appeared in good time the next morning, nicely yet neatly dressed, and watched anxiously for the arrival of their teachers. The little ones who had to remain in school were comforted by the elder children telling them that by-and-by their turn would come, when they would be in the boys' and girls' schools. At the appointed hour the teachers and their little flock set out.

On arriving at their destination, the children were marshalled quietly and orderly through that portion which contained the principal show. The fruit and flowers looked magnificent; and the children were delighted as their teachers talked to them, and told them some of the names of the flowers. After they had inspected these they walked on to the beautiful green, and there were more lovely flowers to look at, and some very

beautiful trees ; and last, but not least, was the pleasure of hearing the band play.

"Now, children," said Miss Calthrop, "you may disperse and walk about the grounds wherever you please, only be very careful not to touch any of the flowers. And you see this tree under which we are standing : now from time to time you must come here and look ; and if you see me and your teachers, you will know you have to come at once. So now off to ramble about."

The children scampered off, delighted, and the teachers soon met some of their friends, and chatted gaily in little groups.

Presently Mr. Carlton appeared, and monopolized Bessie, much to Fanny's chagrin.

"Come, Bessie," said that young gentleman : "let us have a promenade and a quiet chat."

So they walked off together, and, unmindful of those around, they paced up and down ; and, as Miss Calthrop said afterwards, made themselves ridiculously conspicuous. She was sitting on one of the seats in conversation with a lady, and as the two passed and repassed, she could not help seeing them ; and they seemed so engrossed in what they were talking about that she felt annoyed.

Let us draw near, perhaps we may understand some of their conversation.

"I made no promises of any kind, Mr. Carlton,

when we separated, and agreed to be friends only; so now I do not see that you have any right to ask questions concerning my friend, Mr. St. Vincent."

"Well, you will consider a little more, will you not, what I have been saying?"

"I have gone much too far with Mr. St. Vincent to alter now, so I think we had better let the subject drop, for I admire and esteem Mr. St. Vincent very much." And Bessie thought, in her own mind, that he was far more worthy of esteem than her unstable young friend at her side, as, indeed, he was.

"And now," said Bessie, giving her hand to Mr. Carlton, "I must bid you adieu, as I see Miss Calthrop waving her hand impatiently to me."

Bessie soon joined the group under the tree, where all the schools had assembled, the band played "God Save the Queen," and the children sang while they marched out of the grounds.

Miss Calthrop soon found an opportunity to let Bessie know how displeased she was with her morning's proceedings. Fanny, too, had something to say about it, for she had not enjoyed herself at all, and had wished several times that she had remained in school. In the evening, as usual, Bessie met Bernard, and very soon the conversation turned to the flower show. Bernard wanted to

know how the little ones had liked it, and all about everything.

Bessie went into raptures when describing the lovely flowers; and the fruit, well, that was simply wonderful.

Bernard looked admiringly at the enthusiastic girl, and determined in his own mind to obtain, if possible, some of the identical fruit that Bessie had been describing. He asked her if she met many of her friends there.

"Oh, yes," answered Bessie, gaily; "and among them my particular friend, Mr. Carlton; and I displeased poor Fanny and Miss Calthrop very much by walking with and talking to him!"

Bernard made some light remarks, but, nevertheless, he was pondering over her playful observations, for he could not tell if there was anything to fear from that quarter or not.

However, Bessie went on talking quite merrily, and Bernard tried to dismiss the unpleasant thoughts from his mind, and to enjoy himself as much as possible, for the time was passing away rapidly.

Next evening Bernard presented himself rather earlier than usual.

"Here is something for you," he said, laughing. "I wonder if you can guess what it is?"

"No, indeed I cannot. Oh, what ever is it?"

She then opened the parcel, and there were three of the largest and most lovely pears that were ever seen. Bessie looked at them admiringly, and then exclaimed,—

“Why, surely they are some of the very identical prize pears I saw yesterday!”

“Yes, they are,” replied Bernard.

And as he looked at the glowing, happy face, he felt amply repaid for the trouble he had taken in the morning in order to obtain them.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CRISIS.

TIME passed on, and I am afraid Bessie did not progress with her studies as well as she might have done if she had been free at heart, for her frequent walks and the time taken up with Bernard left her little leisure.

"Here is something for you this morning, my dear Bessie," said her mother, handing her a letter.

Bessie took it, and looked at it with no small amount of curiosity, wondering who it could be from, as she did not often receive letters; and, like a great many people, she was speculating who it could be from, instead of opening it to find out.

"Rather an official-looking document," said Bessie. "However, I had better see what is inside."

The following is what she read :—

"We find your name is on our promised list for entering this Institution. Do you intend, God

helping you, to take up your scholarship, and be ready to enter at the date we shall hereafter name? We wish for a speedy answer, as we have so many waiting that would be glad to enter." Signed by the Chaplain of the College.

"Now, mother dear, what shall I do? It will have to be decided at once whether I go to college or not."

Bernard and herself had often talked about her going, but he did not like the idea of so long a separation: the time had not then arrived for a decision, and now it had.

Fanny, of course, had received a notice likewise. They took them to Miss Calthrop.

"And now," says that lady, "all you have to do is just to write, and say you are willing to come at the time they shall appoint; for, of course, you are in the same mind about it as you were: are you not?"

Bessie was silent.

Fanny answered, "I am, Miss Calthrop."

"And are not you, Bessie?"

"I do not quite know. Mother and I have been talking it over, and we thought, perhaps I need only go for one year."

"Now, that is perfect nonsense. What is to prevent your remaining two? You will be all the better qualified for your work."

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Bessie. "I will ask mother what I had better do."

Miss Calthrop was not really so much surprised as she appeared to be, for she had a suspicion lately that there was a gentleman in the way, so she said,—

"Well, Bessie, you must let me know your decision in the morning."

Bernard and Bessie talked it over for a long time. At length Bernard confers with Bessie's father and mother, and it was decided that she should not go at all. They had all learned to love Bernard, so now he receives a promise that at no very distant date Bessie should become his wife.

The next morning when Bessie informed Miss Calthrop of her determination, that lady was somewhat indignant, and said,—

"A pretty way to behave after first writing to the College that you would like to go."

Bessie said, "Will you kindly write and explain for me?"

"No, indeed: you may have the pleasure yourself of making your own explanations. And, another thing, you will likewise have to go, I suppose, and acquaint the Rev. Snowden Richards with this alteration in your plans."

The troublesome letter was written at last, and the interview with the clergyman over, and then

things seemed to go on smoothly again for a time.

Fanny, to be sure, was in distress at the thought of losing the companionship of her dear friend while at college, although she said to Bessie one day,—

“I do not mind nearly so much now that I know you are going to have Mr. St. Vincent instead of Mr. Carlton.”

Bessie now had more leisure to bestow upon her affianced lover than heretofore, at which he was well pleased.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN AMUSING INCIDENT.

“**B**ESSIE dear,” said Bernard one evening, “I want you to do me a favour to-morrow: that is, to let me take you to see Mrs. Ridge,—the lady I am staying with, you know. Since I told her of my engagement she is continually teasing me to introduce you. You are an object of great interest to her now, no doubt, so I should like to gratify her wish. There are two children: a pretty little girl, and a merry, romping boy, who, I am sure, you would like; and I know they would be pleased to have you there.”

Bessie felt rather bashful at being introduced to strangers in the new character of Bernard's promised wife; but he soon overcame all her objections, and obtained her promise for the following evening.

Bernard informed his young friends the next morning that he was going to bring a lady to see

them. And at the time appointed Bessie was ready to accompany him, and was duly introduced to Mrs. Ridge, and little Florrie and Harry. Mr. Ridge held some appointment in the Royal Navy, and was from home.

Bessie was amused to find how these children were attached to Bernard, and what fun they used to have together, for at times he played with them to their hearts' content. They were up to some fine tricks this evening; and when they found Bessie did not mind a little fun, they were delighted. They were running up and down the stairs, and all over the house, after Bernard. Presently, somehow or other, they found themselves in the kitchen, and Bernard was making a pretence of looking for something.

"What do you want?" asked Harry.

"Some paint," said Bernard, "to put on Miss Bessie's cheeks."

In his frolic he dipped the tip of his finger in some red powder that happened to be handy, and proceeded, as the merry children thought, to put it on Bessie's face. But he did nothing of the kind: he only lightly touched her cheek with another finger. Harry thought as he had not succeeded in getting any on to Bessie's cheek, he would try and get a little on Bernard's, which he succeeded in doing, to his no small gratification.

Mrs. Ridge called her little ones away, and the painting process was for the time forgotten.

The lady thought Bernard and Bessie must be getting tired of the children, so she made an excuse for them to be alone for a short time, by saying,—

“Mr. St. Vincent, would you like to show Miss Lester those last pictures Mr. Ridge sent home?”

“To be sure I would, Mrs. Ridge; and,” he inwardly ejaculated, “glad of the chance.”

He lost no time, therefore, in leading his lady-love to the parlour, to view these pictures.

But oh, unlucky chance, no sooner did he find himself alone with Bessie, than the pictures for the moment are forgotten, and he folds her in his arms in a fond embrace!

“I suppose I must show you these pictures,” says Bernard, releasing her. And then, as they seemed to have been away rather a long time, they returned to Mrs. Ridge and the expectant children. All unconscious of their appearance, they enter the well-lighted room, and the little ones look up eagerly to welcome them. But what is the matter? They began clapping their hands and dancing round Bernard with great glee; and Mrs. Ridge looked first at Bernard, then at Bessie, and could scarcely restrain her laughter.

“What have you been doing, Mr. St. Vincent?” she asked.

Harry whispered to his mother something about red powder, which Bessie overheard; and then he added aloud what Mr. St. Vincent was doing in the kitchen.

The powder Harry had contrived to get on Bernard's face had been forgotten during the embrace, and became transferred to Bessie's fair skin. She felt her cheeks glow now. Bernard very coolly stepped in front of her to screen her from view, and immediately took his handkerchief to remove the offending colour, whispering,—

“Never mind them, dear.”

It took some time, however, for Bessie to regain her composure, after, as she said, such a ridiculous affair. With the children it was often afterwards a source of great amusement, and they did not fail to remind Bernard of it sometimes.

CHAPTER XIX.

A LATE HOUR.

BERNARD and Bessie still continued their walks when the weather permitted, and nearly always chose them by the sea; for they both dearly loved it, and thought they would enjoy it as much as possible while they had the opportunity, for very soon it would be much too cold for such lengthened walks as they were in the habit of taking.

Ah, Bernard and Bessie, these were happy times to you then, and no doubt you thought you were going to be an exception to the general rule! That, indeed, to you the course of true love would run smooth, especially as Bernard thought he had surmounted the first difficulty. But if they could have looked into the future, they would indeed have felt troubled at the perplexities that would arise. But God, in His infinite mercy, has veiled the future from our sight; and we have the blessed

promise, "That as our day, so shall our strength be." Let us not, then, meet troubles half way, "but confidently commit our way unto the Lord, and He will direct our paths."

"Oh, Bernard, do look," exclaimed Bessie, "how lovely the water appears this evening, with the moon shining upon it so splendidly!"

They both stood and gazed with admiration. Who would not? For the sight was indeed a lovely one, as would be admitted by most persons who have had the pleasure of a moonlight ramble by the seashore. Bernard and Bessie walked on until they drew near the extreme end of the promenade, then Bernard said,—

"My dear, if we walk beyond this point we shall not be able to get a seat, and I am afraid you must be getting tired. Would you not like a rest for a short time?"

"Yes: I am getting rather tired," Bessie replied. "Let us rest there for a short time."

They soon found a seat to their satisfaction, not far from the water. A great many of the chairs were already occupied, for the rest and the air were quite enjoyable. Unmindful of those around them, they were quietly chatting, and soon became so engrossed in themselves that they did not notice that one by one the seats were all vacated, until at last they were the only persons remaining

in that particular spot. Bessie was the first to look round and notice the deserted appearance, and then said,—

“I think it must be getting late, Bernard.”

He looked at his watch.

“Oh, no,” he said, “it is not very late! We can stay a little longer.”

After a few minutes, Bessie said,—

“I think we must have been here longer than we imagine. Look, Bernard, what a deserted appearance the shore has!”

Bernard looked, and it was as Bessie had said. He felt rather uneasy, and took out his watch again. He examined it.

“Why, Bessie dear, I am afraid this naughty watch has deceived us: it has stopped!”

He at once gave his arm to Bessie, and they hurried away.

“We must walk as quickly as possible, Bessie, for I fear it is so late that your mother will not like to trust you with me again.”

They walked on in silence. Only a few stragglers were to be seen along the Parade, and they had no opportunity yet of finding out the time. At last a clock came in sight, and, horrible to relate, the hands pointed to nearly midnight!

Poor Bessie was in a sad state of alarm, for she knew what her kind, indulgent mother would suffer

on her account. And she was right ; for poor Mrs. Lester was extremely anxious, and could not imagine what might have befallen her child ; and fearing some accident had overtaken them, dressed and went out to search, and as Bernard and Bessie entered the street they saw the anxious mother at the door.

Bessie was almost breathless with hurrying. Her mother caught her in her arms, exclaiming,—

“Oh, my dear ! where have you been ? I am so thankful to see you again. I have been in such a state of alarm.”

Bernard humbly apologised and offered explanations, and they never overstepped the mark again by remaining out to such a late hour.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

THE year 1862 was fast drawing to a close, and the last examination that Bessie would have to go through was at hand. After that she would be free from her school responsibilities.

On a fine morning in December there might have been seen a number of persons of both sexes wending their way to one particular school, in the centre of the town of Brinybeach. This was the place selected for the teachers to meet one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools, and then the examination would take place. Bernard had been informed of the circumstance, and thought he would take a stroll in that direction. Possibly he might be rewarded by a sight of Bessie before she entered. He saw a number of young ladies, but his eyes soon singled her out from among the bevy of

fair girls. She greeted him smilingly, but few words were spoken, as she had no time to linger. He watched her lovingly till she was quite out of sight. She was a fair picture to him. He thought she looked the pattern of neatness, yet stately and ladylike in appearance. She wore a dark brown merino dress, no ornaments of any description, only frills round her fair neck and wrists. The examination passed off successfully, and Bessie felt greatly relieved when it was over.

Bernard, of course, did not fail to appear that evening, to offer his congratulations; for he was quite as glad as Bessie that it was over, and thought now she would have more time to be with him.

Fanny would still have to go through another examination, in order to be qualified for the much talked of Queen's scholarship; but that, as my readers are already aware, Bessie did not intend to compete for. Fanny would miss her friend sadly, then, there was no doubt, as they had always been together during their studies; but now she would have to go to London alone.

A short time before Christmas Bernard said,—

“I am afraid, dear Bessie, I shall have to leave you for a little while. I think I must be in London for a few days, but I shall endeavour to be back as quickly as possible; and after that I hope we shall

be able to make some definite arrangements for our future home."

"Fanny had gone to London, and now Bernard talked of going it would be very lonely for her," Bessie thought.

However, when the time came, Bessie had to part with both, and her first consolation was derived from the pleasure she experienced in receiving a letter from Bernard—the first she had ever had from him. She read it, and re-read it, and then very carefully put it away among the few treasures she possessed. She received also another letter from Fanny, telling her how she was progressing in the examination, and what day to expect her home.

Bernard managed to conclude his business in time to escort Fanny from London to Brinybeach, and they both hoped and expected that Bessie would be at the station to meet them.

As the train steamed into the station, they both anxiously looked on the platform for the one they both loved so well, and were not disappointed, for there was Bessie waiting to welcome them back. The impatient Bernard sprang out, and was quickly by her side, and then hastened back to apologize to Fanny and assist her to alight.

They all spent a pleasant time together in the evening, and Bernard was invited to spend the

Christmas at Bessie's home, which he was very pleased to do; nevertheless, it all seemed very strange to him. This keeping of Christmas Day, celebrating the birth of Christ, set Bernard thinking, and many were the conflicting thoughts that passed through his mind.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE NEW YEAR.

“**A** HAPPY New Year! A Happy New Year” is passed heartily and hopefully from friend to friend as the New Year 1863 dawned.

Bernard and Bessie were together, listening to the merry peal of bells, telling of the departure of the old year and ringing the new one in. Bernard was thinking that, perhaps, before very long the fair girl at his side would belong to him.

Oh, how little either of them dreamed that on the following New Year's Day they would be further apart than ever, and, as it seemed then, with no probability of a re-union; but for the present we must leave them, and turn to other scenes!

In a well-appointed house, situated in one of the northern suburbs of the great Metropolis, my story takes me next.

Let us see how the opening year finds this family, to whom I am about to introduce my readers.

It was evening, the curtains were drawn, the fire made up and shone brilliantly, lighting up the room, and giving it a very cosy appearance. But you will soon gather from the conversation that there was sorrow in the house.

On the sofa a lady was reclining: she was passed middle life, but was still handsome,—a brunette,—her black eyes still sparkled brilliantly at times; but there was a certain hauteur about her general deportment, so that you could not fail to perceive the lady was mistress of the house, and reigned supreme over all in it. This was Bernard St. Vincent's mother.

There were two other younger ladies in the room and a gentleman, who was no other than Bernard's brother Edmund, and the ladies we would introduce were two of his sisters, Sarah and Dinah.

Bernard had seven sisters altogether, and when telling Bessie of the fact, playfully added, "He had one for every day in the week." He had likewise another brother abroad.

At this particular time Mrs. St. Vincent was far from well, and one of her daughters was extremely ill with scarlet fever. But, perhaps, we shall be

able to judge better of the condition of affairs if we listen to the conversation.

"How is Judith this evening?" asks Edmund.

Sarah sorrowfully answered, "She is still very, very ill, and we are getting quite out of spirits, and worn out with watching."

"Have you succeeded yet in obtaining us a nurse?"

"No: that I have not. I wish I could: I know you want one sadly. Mamma being ill too."

"Yes, indeed," said Sarah; "for dear papa is very unwell likewise to-day."

"Edmund, what shall we do?" exclaims Mrs. St. Vincent. "Do you know, I think you had better write and ask Bernie to come. He would be able to help us, and he might succeed in finding us a nurse. I do not think there is anything particular to detain him in Brinybeach."

"Oh, that is a good suggestion!" said both sisters and brother, their countenances brightening at the idea; and Sarah remarked,—

"I am sure dear Bernie would come, even if he were particularly engaged there, when he knew how ill papa and Judith are."

And so they agreed that Edmund should write at once and acquaint Bernie with the sad facts. The letter was duly written and received.

Poor Bernard, you may be sure, was in sad

distress at the painful intelligence, but lost no time in making arrangements for his speedy departure. His greatest trial was, of course, now leaving and bidding farewell to his darling Bessie. He tried to cheer her, and spoke hopefully.

"Perhaps, dear, things are not quite so bad as they look."

And then he told her he should endeavour to write very frequently, and that he should look forward to the pleasure of hearing very often from her. And then Bernard was gone, and Bessie was left alone again.

"Yes, alone," she says: "more so now than ever; for Fanny had gone to college, and even Miss Calthrop had gone away, and now Bernard had left her."

The time seemed longer to her now, as she was without any definite occupation, and she was not used to an idle life.

"Oh, dear!" thinks Bessie: "this new year I was expecting so much from has, indeed, began sadly."

Arrived in London, Bernard hastened at once to his father's house, and there, instead of finding things better, as he had said to Bessie, unfortunately found them a great deal worse; but here I shall take the liberty of quoting from a letter written to Bessie soon after his arrival.

“ My darling Bessie,

“ I take the first opportunity of writing you a few lines, to let you know of my safe arrival. Excuse my writing much, dear, as I have a great deal to do, and plenty to think about.

“ I found my brother in a very dejected and care-worn condition, having been up the whole of the night, and so busy the day before. For two days they have been trying to get a nurse for my mother and sister; and have sent to hospitals, charitable institutions, and everywhere they thought there was any chance, but the nurses were nearly all engaged. And even persons who promised to help, when they came and heard it was fever of a contagious character, declined and left, though they were offered high remuneration.

“ The doctor has just called, and he says my mother may remain ill sometime; but, thank God, my sister is progressing favourably. My father is not at all well, and is obliged to remain at home. He is dreadfully low-spirited and nervous.

“ I hope and pray, dearest, you are quite well, and that in my next letter I shall be able to give a better account of the invalids here. At present I cannot form an opinion as to when I may return; but cheer up, dear: make yourself as happy and comfortable as circumstances will admit. I will write to you as often as I can.

"Good-bye, my darling Bessie. I am waiting anxiously to hear from you, and cannot write more at present.

"I remain

"Your devoted

"BERNARD."

Here I must diverge a little, in order to say a few words respecting those valuable institutions for trained nurses. Within the last few years they have increased and improved so much that, methinks, at the present time no one would experience the same difficulty in obtaining efficient help as Mrs. St. Vincent did then. Some people will object, and say these nurses are too expensive, and, alas! for many they are; but, I believe, some benevolent persons have arranged so that even poor folks may derive the benefit of having skilful nursing. God grant that many more may spring up and assist in the good work, for such institutions are much needed.

But to return to our story. Bessie was very glad to receive this letter, though in great trouble for Bernard and his family. She even offered to go and assist in nursing, for she said,—

"I am afraid, dear Bernie, that you may get ill, too, with so much anxiety; but if you should, I would come and nurse you."

Bernard was not long in answering this letter. He writes,—

“My Darling,

“Many thanks for your kindness in answering my letter so quickly. It was a consolation to me after the anxious night I had passed ; but when I came to read your offer to come and nurse me, the tears very quickly started, and I had to turn my head round for fear my sister should see them. I hope and trust, dearest, that your love and affection may not be put to that test, although I doubt not your willingness to run all risks to nurse me, should I require it. My sister is worse to-day, and cannot bear me to leave her more than I can possibly help. I fear she is very frightened as well. The doctor called this morning, and said he would come again in the evening. If she gets over to-day and improves, she may recover, but it is the critical point just now. My mother, who was extremely anxious to see her, attempted to get up yesterday, but was unable to dress ; and, finding herself so ill, was obliged to go to bed again.

“I am sorry to have to tell you that the doctor has ordered my father to remain in bed, and I have just assisted him to undress ; and now unexpectedly finding myself with a few minutes to spare, employ them in writing to you, as my

inclination leads me more that way than to do anything else.

“To-night I think my brother will be here. Thinking of business is quite out of the question ; but thinking of you, dear, I cannot help. Every minute almost I am longing for the time when I shall be with you again. Till then, my dear, with best wishes for your health and happiness,

“I remain, my own darling,

“Your ever loving and constant

“BERNARD”

CHAPTER XXII.

FANNY AT COLLEGE.

FANNY kept Bessie duly informed of all her proceedings. Nevertheless, she felt very dull indeed. She missed her friend so much. In the first letter she writes,—

“My darling Bessie,

“I am longing to see you already: I miss you so much. Remember me to Mr. St. Vincent, and thank him for the little book he put into my hands at parting. I shall prize it very much, and use it every day.”

Bernard had kindly escorted Fanny to the train, and had given her a little package containing the book alluded to.

Letters followed each other in quick succession; for, as Fanny writes,—

“You see, dearest, I cannot help writing to you. How I wish I could see you! I feel so lonely.

But I must not dwell upon that, but just give you a little insight into our proceedings here.

"We had a prayer meeting this morning, and an examination in arithmetic this afternoon.

"We can go out for a walk from half-past twelve to half-past one; but not at all in the evening, until after Easter. Of course visitors are allowed here. I think I should like it all well enough if you were here likewise."

Bessie was, of course, very pleased to hear from her friend, and answered her letters as quickly as she could, because she knew they would help to cheer her up. The first letter, from some cause or other, happened to get delayed, which rather put Fanny out, but she wrote again thus,—

"I had such a pleasant surprise this morning: one of the students asked if my name was Miss Lee. She said, 'There is a letter for you, then, in the hall.' I was so delighted, for I had not been able to do anything because of my anxiety to have a letter from you. The young lady who told me, said, 'She hoped now I should be happier, and talk a little more. For, you see, we did not even know your name.'"

Time passed; and now Bessie had sad news to write to Fanny. She tells her how lonely she is; for Bernard has been obliged to leave her and go to his family, as there is so much illness there.

Fanny fully sympathized with her friend. She writes,—

“I am so sorry for you, darling, and for dear Mr. St. Vincent. I do hope his parents and sister will be spared. Cheer up, dear! I do hope brighter things are in store for you.

“With best love,

“From your own friend,

“FANNY.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

LETTERS FROM BERNARD.

WE left Bernard in the midst of family afflictions. And in order to know how his friends are progressing, I think we cannot do better than quote some extracts from his letters. He writes to Bessie,—

“My poor Darling,

“My last letter to you was a sorrowful one, but I regret to say things have not improved ; and I have not slept since I last wrote. We succeeded yesterday in getting a man to stay with my father, who is much worse. He has become so paralyzed as not to be able to move a limb. He does not like any one to wait on him but me, and I am quite exhausted. Oh, my dear, you cannot believe what I have passed through ! Last Saturday night was the most unhappy and anxious time I have ever passed ; additional anxiety being caused by my youngest sister having caught the

fever. The poor girl had all along been so active and useful that she was exceedingly missed ; and, when once taken ill, was very soon prostrated."

Bernard wrote to his sisters that were away from home, thinking they would come and assist in nursing. His favourite sister—Minnie—soon responded, and came as quickly as possible ; but the others were afraid to venture. Before, however, Minnie could arrive, Bernard was in great straits. He writes of his youngest sister,—

"Six sisters and two brothers, a mother and father, and yet there is only myself at present to do anything for her. And my poor father's looks are most heart-rending, as he is almost speechless, imploring me not to leave him, not knowing how I am wanted elsewhere.

"God alone knows when I shall see you again, and under what different circumstances.

"There seems little hope now of my father surviving. I may be delayed in endeavouring to comfort my mother, and in making future arrangements for her.

"You may not hear again from me just yet if a change takes place ; but it will not be my fault. And pray excuse it, as you know, dearest, I will never forget you, and comfort you wherever I can ; but am a poor hand at comforting now, needing it so much myself. Write as frequently as you can,

dearest, and let me know how you get on. I must conclude, as I am called away. So good-bye, darling. Sorrow will not last for ever; and hope always for the best.

“I remain,

“My poor absent one, your

“BERNARD.”

Bessie felt very sad when she received this, and hastened at once to write to Bernard a long letter, to cheer and comfort him, if she could. But she seemed bewildered. It had all come so suddenly. Could it be possible Bernard's father was so ill, and perhaps would die? She seemed as if she could scarcely believe it. She knew how much Bernard was attached to his father, so she kept hoping against hope that he would yet be spared to his family. But, alas! no: she is not kept a great while in suspense; and a glance showed her that the worst had happened. In the next letter Bernard writes,—

“My poor deserted Darling,

“Sad and melancholy are the tidings I am about to communicate; but God's will be done. And you may join with me in thanking Him who, in His mercy, has preserved me, and enabled me to bear my great affliction with resignation, and given me supernatural strength to go through all I have done, and enabled

me to do the last kind offices for my poor father, who departed this life five minutes after two this morning. His sufferings were very severe, and he required the most constant attention."

Here poor Bernard broke down, and had to leave the conclusion of his letter until the next day, for he was very worn out and exhausted, and was glad to try and get a little rest. He continues,—

"I had written thus far yesterday, but could write no more. My two sisters still remain in bed. One, thank God, is out of danger; but the effect that the knowledge of our father's death had upon the other was very dangerous, and my brother had to fetch the doctor. We could not manage to keep it from her. I feared the tragedy would not end with one death. My dear, I must remain in London at least until this day week; and then, after I have paid you a short visit, I shall have, I fear, to return, and probably be detained for the next two or three months, to settle my poor father's affairs. Excuse all errors.

"I remain, darling,

"With profound and sincere love,

"BERNARD."

Bessie was very grieved when she read of Bernard's loss; and how she wished that she had a right to go and help him, for she was sure he wanted her sadly. Of course Bessie knew now

that it would make a considerable delay in their future arrangements, and wished heartily that she had some work to do. "However," as she said, "I must not trouble too much about that now, but try and write a comforting letter to Bernard." Which elicited the following reply,—

"My dearest,

"Many thanks for your kind and sympathizing letter. If you do not hear from me as often as you expect, pray do not attribute it to neglect, or think that I love you less. You cannot possibly have any idea how I am bewildered,—so many business matters of my late lamented father to attend to. And my two sisters still remain in bed, though the one that was ill first will, we hope, shortly be able to get about. The other mends a little, and then relapses, so as to keep us in a constant state of anxiety. I am as well as can be expected. Let me know how you are. I cannot tell you how I long to see you. Amid all my griefs and troubles I do not forget you, trusting the time may not be so far distant as I imagine before we meet.

"I remain, darling, with unchanging love,

"Your true and constant

"BERNARD."

CHAPTER XXIV.

LETTER FROM FANNY.

“MY dearest Bessie, how I wish I was at home now, for I know you are unhappy. My darling, I think we have had nothing but trouble since we parted. I know it is very hard to bear, but you must try and keep up. I think I have never felt so unhappy about several things as since I have been here. I have wished I could be better ; but, dearest, I seem to get worse and worse. And I cannot be happy. And I feel as if I should never be fit for a teacher. You will say I am writing in a very sad strain ; but you are the only one to whom I can say anything. Poor Mr. St. Vincent ! How sorry I am for him ! I do trust his sisters will be spared. I should be very glad to see him. I have had a letter from Miss Calthrop. Do write to her, dear. She wonders at

your silence. Write soon, and tell me all the news. Have you been to our old school? It would do you good to go out.

“With ever best love, yours,

“FANNY.”

Ah, dear readers, you see by the tenor of Fanny's letter that these young friends had not yet learned to know and lean upon that loving Friend who could comfort them in every sorrow: “The God of all consolation.” But perhaps their loving Father was chastening them, in order to bring them unto Himself. Fanny's letter set Bessie thinking. What about? Why, she just thought she would walk to an old familiar spot, namely, school, and see how they were all getting on.

Bessie walked one fine afternoon to the well-known part, and entered the school. The children were delighted, although several had been drafted into the other schools, so that only the younger ones remained. The teachers were very pleased to have Bessie for a short time again among them. One of them said,—

“Do let me introduce you, dear, to our new mistress,—Miss Grantham. She is very nice, and good, and kind; but I think she has been more used to older girls, or even grown up students, than to an infant school. I am afraid, dear Bessie, you will not think we are getting on

very well. You know, dear, Miss Calthrop was such a strict disciplinarian, the order was always so good. But Miss Grantham has had such trouble lately. She took this school to be near her friend, whom she loved so dearly ; and now she has been taken from her by death quite suddenly. What are you doing now ? How I wish you could come and help us, if only for a short time. We do miss you and Fanny so much."

Bessie was introduced to Miss Grantham, and she liked the lady very much ; and they entered into interesting conversation, and Miss Grantham invited Bessie to come and spend a whole day with them. She gladly accepted the invitation, for it seemed to do her good to be connected, though only temporarily, with the old work. Miss Grantham was delighted with her, and wondered if it would be possible to get Bessie there for a time as assistant.

"I will think it over a little, and take the first opportunity I may have of consulting the Rev. Snowden Richards on the subject." The lady continued her reflections thus : "I am sure it would be a good thing for the school if we could secure Bessie, as the teachers we now have are all so young."

Miss Grantham had heard all about Bessie and Fanny ; and knew the former had left as she

thought of being married, and the latter had gone to college. When she heard of the loss Bessie's intended had sustained, she thought in all probability the marriage would be postponed ; and then, perhaps, Bessie would be willing to come.

Miss Grantham was watching the young girl with pleasure, as she was talking and giving the elder children a lesson on the gallery. And it seemed pleasant to Bessie to be there. At parting, Miss Grantham told Bessie to come whenever she liked. She should be most happy to see her. And the young teachers did not fail to express the same sentiment.

As Bessie returned home, her thoughts kept wandering to the afflicted and bereaved family of her Bernard, though her mother said,—

“I do believe a little work has done you good, for before you seemed so dull and lonely : not at all like my lively and saucy Bessie. You must not despond. I am sure Mr. St. Vincent will come and see you as soon as possible. Besides, what a number of letters you get ! There is one for you now.” Which Bessie took up and read most eagerly.

“My dearest Bessie,

“I wished very much to have written to you before, but could not manage. I regret having to inform you that another unfavour-

able change has taken place, and things look again extremely critical. My youngest sister has had a relapse, and my eldest sister has caught the fever. The nurse we had was so exhausted last night as to be obliged to go home, but I trust she will return to-night. My second sister (Minnie) talked of visiting Brinybeach for a short time, previous to her return to the family she was staying with when we wrote for her. I should like you to see Minnie, dear. I have spoken to her several times about you, and you might be a companion for her, as she does not know any one in your neighbourhood. But, alas, now I do not know how it will be: it is doubtful if she will escape the malady herself; and as she is my favourite, I have promised to nurse her if she gets ill, unless I get ill too, and cannot do so. I feel very desponding sometimes: this second edition seems too much for me,—too great a trial. I hardly know myself: I look so careworn and different to what I did when in B——. Oh, dear, when I look back, only a few weeks ago, I never thought we should be so long separated; but we must still hope and trust in Him who alone can save, and we must all die at some time or the other! I will write to you again shortly, and then most likely I shall be able to say when I will come. I have nothing more to tell you at present, except, dear, that I love you

as much as ever, and in all my troubles do not forget you.

“I remain, darling,

“Your devoted

“BERNARD.”

Bessie lost no time in answering this, and very soon received another letter; and this time of a much more hopeful character, telling her that he was just coming for a day or two, but would not be able to remain long, as his sister Minnie would, on his return home, try and come to Brinybeach. Bessie met Bernard at the station, but was shocked at the difference in his appearance. He looked much older than he really was before these trials, and now they had the effect of making him look older still and quite ill. Bernard said he felt better already, from only just seeing Bessie, so he was sure the visit would do him good.

But the time went all too fast. And the parting again so soon, they did not like to contemplate. They had much to tell each other, although they had written so frequently.

“I hope you will like my sister. She will remain about a fortnight, and that will pass away a little time. I think Edmund will come down with her for a day or two, and when my sister returns I hope to come and see you again.”

CHAPTER XXV.

BESSIE IS INTRODUCED TO MINNIE.

EDMUND and his sister Minnie duly arrived, and took up their quarters at the west end, some distance from Bessie's home. But Edmund arranged with his sister to go and fetch Bessie to spend the day with them, so that they might get acquainted before he returned, and accordingly wrote to tell her so.

"I wonder, now," said Bessie to her mother, "if Miss St. Vincent is anything like Bernard. He is very fond of her, and, indeed, I must say he seems very fond of all his sisters and brothers: a great deal more so than some I know."

Mrs. Lester remarked,—

"I am very glad that occasion is given for you to go out a little more; for since you have not gone to school, I am sure you are in the house too much, so I trust you will find the lady a pleasant

companion, and that in her society you will enjoy yourself a little."

Shortly after this conversation Edmund St. Vincent called, and escorted Bessie to his sister. They spent a pleasant time together, and had a nice walk by the sea, and then Edmund saw Bessie safely home.

"Well, dear," said her mother, on her return: "have you spent a pleasant day?"

"Oh, yes, mother dear, that I have! I like Bernie's sister very much; but she is not, in the least, like her brother in some respects. She is very fair, very fat. There, now, that is not polite, is it? I must correct myself, and say the lady is inclined to *embonpoint*. I am sure she is very sweet tempered and amiable. I do not wonder she is a favourite with Bernie; but I shall be able to give you further particulars if you wish, for I am going there again to-morrow."

Edmund was soon obliged to return to London; but Minnie and Bessie spent many pleasant hours together, and had many nice walks. What seemed to puzzle Minnie was the number of people, especially gentlemen, who would bow to Bessie. She wrote to Bernard that she was pleased and interested in the young lady. On Minnie's return to London, of course many anxious inquiries were

made respecting Bessie. After answering some of them, Minnie finished up by saying,—

“Well, Bernie, I am afraid you will not get the young lady, if you are not there to look after her.”

“What do you mean, Minnie?”

And then she explained what I have before mentioned, that she thought Bessie had several admirers.

“I do not half like it,—no, that I do not,” said Bernard to himself. “But it is silly of me, for I have no doubt Minnie is laughing at me all the time, for taking so much notice of what she said; and, of course, she does not understand that, in the public position Bessie has been placed, it would be strange if she were not well known. However, I will try and go at once.”

And Bernard hastened to do what he could, and packed his bag. After making all the necessary arrangements, something unforeseen transpired to prevent the fulfilment of his wishes. Should he go regardless,—no, that would not do, for Bessie had advised him before not to do that; so, for the present, he tries to be satisfied with writing, as follows,—

“My very dearest Bessie,

“I have not much to write about, having seen my sister so recently, and heard from her about you, that you were quite well. I

wanted to pay you a visit to-night, but have been disappointed. I even got my bag ready, and was prevented coming. Oh, dear, how ill it makes me feel ! I might, indeed, come, perfectly regardless of consequences ; but your kind advice restrained me. You will have a deal to answer for, my dear. It is, indeed, few I allow to control me, and only one person has much influence. What business that person has with it, or how she obtained the influence, I do not know ; but I will ask when I see her. Looking forward, anxiously to be consoled with one of your precious letters (a good long one, please), I must conclude, my dearest Bessie, with unchanging love.

“Your devoted and constant

“BERNARD.”

When Bessie received this letter she felt rather disappointed, but she set about writing the long letter to console him. She had just received one from Fanny, and so thought she would give him a little news concerning her friend ; and, looking over Fanny's letter to see what more could be extracted, read again,—

“You see, dear Bessie, we have some fun here sometimes, as well as work ; for one of the students in our dormitory is busy—at what, do you think ?—unsewing her night dress ; for Miss L—— has been up to some of her tricks, sewing it up. She

likewise put up all our curtains at dinner time, to make us think the committee lady had done it because our rooms were untidy."

"Well, that will not do to write to Bernard ; but stop, what have I here ?"

And she goes on to read,—

"I have written some verses, if you will read them."

But Bessie could not understand whether she meant she had copied or composed them ; but suspected the former. However, thinking it would help to make a long letter, she copied them into Bernard's, telling him where they came from.

"So you think you love me : do you ? Well, it may be so.
But there are many ways of loving, I have learnt to know,—
Many ways, and but one true one, which is very rare ;
And the counterfeits look brighter, though they will not wear.

"I have heard, or dreamt, it may be, what love is when true :
How to test and how to try it is the gift of few.
Only a true heart can find it,—true, as it is true ;
Only eyes, as clear and tender, look it through and through.

"If it die, it will not perish by time's slow decay :
True love only grows the stronger day by day.
Tell me, then, do you dare offer this true love to me ?
Neither you nor I can answer : we will wait and see."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SURPRISE.

“**I** MUST not bid you adieu, dear, without delivering a message I was sent particularly to communicate.”

The speaker was Miss Pearson,—or rather Lottie, as she was generally called,—one of the young teachers before mentioned, and she was addressing Bessie. She had called rather early.

“Oh, indeed!” said Bessie. “I daresay what you have to tell is not of much importance: is it?”

“It is to me, and the rest of the school, so I hope it will be to you.”

“Let us hear what it is, then.”

“Well, dear Bessie, yesterday the Rev. Snowden Richards paid a visit to our school, and Miss Grantham took the opportunity to ask if she might have an assistant. And he seemed agreeable, if one suitable could be found. And then, dear,—she hopes you will not be offended—

she mentioned you, and thought perhaps you would come, if only for a short time. He then called me, and asked if I would come and tell you this, and say, 'If you could spare time, he would be very glad to see you to-day.' So, dear Bessie, I hope you will go and see him, and promise to come, for I am sure he intends asking you. You are surprised, are you not? Do come! But do not stop too long thinking about it, there's a darling."

Bessie looked quiet and thoughtful.

"I must think a little about it, I suppose, Lottie, though you are so anxious."

Lottie said, "Good-bye," and ran off, laughingly exclaiming,—

"We shall see you soon."

Bessie and her mother quietly talked it over, and they both came to the conclusion that it would be much better for Bessie to have something to do; so, accordingly, she set out, and paid a visit to the clergyman, who was very pleased to see her, and soon told her what he had to propose. Bessie agreed to become Miss Grantham's assistant; but not for any specified time, that she might be able to leave whenever she felt disposed.

On her return home, she found a letter from Bernard, in answer to her long one, telling her he would try and see her friend Fanny, and then pay a visit to her for a few days. Bessie was very

glad ; for now she would be able to tell Bernard all about her temporary engagement, instead of writing it. She would only send a short note to-day, to say she would be pleased to see him. However, Bernard appeared even earlier than Bessie expected. He had not received her last letter.

“It is of no consequence,” said Bessie. “I can tell you what is in it.”

Bernard listened attentively while Bessie narrated her interview with the clergyman. He saw that she had made up her mind to go ; and, of course, as matters stood, he did not see that he could raise any objection ; “besides,” as he said, “the young lady likes it.” So, after Bernard returned to London, Bessie once more resumed her accustomed work, and was soon in regular attendance at the school.

Miss Grantham and Bessie became great friends. What this friendship led to, and how this lady’s influence affected her after-career, we shall at some future time relate.

On Bernard’s return to London he wrote the following letter,—

“My dearest Bessie,

“I miss you so much already : you cannot think how much. Every time I part from you to go to London I seem to feel

it more. Your very nice letter, that I found on my return, seemed to revive me a little, and cheer me up, knowing who it came from, although I have seen the dear writer since. Still, you write like you speak, and there was more in that letter than you told me about. I am thankful to say I found my sisters much better, and able to get about a little. You will, no doubt, soon have Fanny with you, as it is so near Easter. I am afraid I shall not be able to come again just yet, but shall expect to hear from you frequently. With love, in the fondest way I can dedicate it to my dearest Bessie,

“From your devoted

“BERNARD.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

MISUNDERSTANDING.

THERE is an old saying, "The course of true love never runs smoothly;" and our two friends proved no exception to the general rule. An unpleasantness arose from a wilful misrepresentation of Bernard's character. Gossips, you see again, must have something to say in the matter. A person called on Bessie, representing herself a friend of the family, and, of course, as such, could give reliable information. And she managed very skilfully to sow the seeds of mistrust in Bessie's heart.

Poor Bernard was indeed grieved, when Bessie wrote to him about what she had heard, to think his darling, in whom he placed so much confidence, should have given credence to a tale from a stranger; and he hastened at once to her, endeavouring to clear up the mystery. Things

soon appeared right again ; but suspicion once roused, confidence altogether is not so easily restored ; and, instead of the pleasant letters that used to pass between them, correspondence of a character rather the reverse frequently occurred. I am afraid Bessie was very inconsiderate in some of her communications, as we may infer from the tenor of a letter Bernard writes on this occasion.

“ My very dearest Bessie,

“ I received your letter last evening, and the effect it had upon me I cannot describe. I had not felt well from the time I last wrote to you, and this letter from you did not contribute towards my recovery. I have a severe headache, and am altogether unwell ; so much so, that it is even painful for me to sit up to write. However, I endure it, as I cannot bear to keep silence. I passed last night sleepless, thinking of what had occurred, and how I should write to you in return, because it will be a relief when it is over ; and I make the effort, sooner than delay.”

He enters into particulars, which I need not here narrate ; but, before the close of his letter, goes on to say,—

“ Unfortunately, it appears for myself, I am too fond of you. I love you too well for my own

peace of mind. As for being a Jew, or of the Jewish persuasion, religion is, of course, a most solemn and serious subject, and I am too much overcome now to treat it as it deserves, but will enter further into that in my next letter. Suffice it for the present, I am a free-thinker, and I do not profess any religion in particular. God alone knows which is right. The religion of the heart, and acting according to the dictates of conscience, cannot be wrong. No one can help how they are born and brought up. But more of this I will explain hereafter. I sincerely hope that this may be the last unpleasant letter that may pass between us, but that there may be many pleasant ones in store. So, with fervent prayers for your health and happiness,

“ Believe me to remain

“ Yours until death,

“ BERNARD.”

Other letters followed, and Bernard was very anxious. It seemed to him as if Bessie and he were drifting more apart. In one of his letters he encloses the following lines :—

“ Oh, come back to these arms, then, my own, ever dear,
Though thou hast long kept me between hope and fear ;
Here's one that to you is so true and steadfast,
That his heart and his all, all's thy own to the last !

“Oh, why love at all, then, if love not the same,
If born Jew or born Gentile, so as not profane?
I know not, nor ask not, what creed you may be :
I know only I love thee, and love only thee !

“When hearts so entwine as to seem only one,
To one mode of thinking they soon can be won ;
It matters but little what words we may say,
If in heart, and in soul, we can join when we pray.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NOTES FROM MISS GRANTHAM.

I MENTIONED in a former chapter that I should have somewhat to relate concerning the influence Miss Grantham's example and advice had upon Bessie, but think I cannot do better than introduce one or more of that lady's letters. The first was written after Bessie had been called away rather unexpectedly, while she was spending the evening with Miss Grantham.

"My dear Bessie,

"You were called away so unexpectedly this evening that you forgot the book ; however, I have copied the verses out for you, and so saved you the trouble. I was very sorry you were obliged to go, but it could not be helped. You must come again next week, if you can. Come any time you like : I shall always be glad to see you. I love you very much, dear Bessie. I do

not know what has made me feel so much interest in you, but I certainly do so. Believe me, I most earnestly desire your happiness, both here and hereafter. But, dear, you will never be really happy until you know Jesus as your own Saviour. I am sure you do not feel quite happy always. What are you to do? Only come to Jesus: just as you are. He will forgive all your sins. He will make you His own dear child. Look to Him, believe in Him, love Him. He loves you, dearest Bessie, more than I do,—more than anybody does,—and longs to save you. Oh, let Him do it! You will be really happy then. You will have sorrows, but you will feel your Father is chastening and guiding you all in love. None of us can tell what our lot in life may be. It matters little, if we have heaven at the close. Death may come,—will come,—but, if we are in Christ, it will be a welcome messenger to carry us home. I do hope and pray, dear Bessie, that a long and happy life may be yours, if it is the Lord's will.

“May you be a comfort and joy to him who has chosen you to be his wife, and may he be a comfort and joy to you. But, most of all, I pray that God may make you His own. I want to meet you in heaven: to see you happy for ever. ‘But,’ you might say, ‘how does Miss Grantham know I am not a Christian? What have I done

that she should talk to me like this?' You have been good and faithful in your work, dear Bessie. You have been most amiable and affectionate; but you have not given your heart to Jesus: have you? And without this, all our amiability, all our earnestness, will not save us. You know it as well as I do. Oh, if I could see your soul safe in Jesus before I left, I should feel that my work here had not been for nought! I should bless God for the day I came here, though in this place I have lost her who was dearer to me than my life. I love her still, for I shall see her again, and live with her for ever. Oh, is it not worth something even to feel this? I hope you will always believe that I really care for you deeply and truly. Can you feel towards me as a friend,—one you can trust? Take care of your bodily health. Remember you have another to think of, now that you are going to be married. I hope you will not feel hurt at what I have written. If you can spare five minutes, I wish you would write a line, or come round. With much love,

“Believe me, dear Bessie,

“Your affectionate Friend.”

At the time Bessie received this letter she was feeling anything but happy: various were the causes that prevented her feeling so. The misunderstanding and unpleasantness with Bernard

my readers are already acquainted with. And now Miss Grantham reminds her she is not a Christian : at least, not in heart ; outwardly, of course, she is.

“For,” as Bessie says, “I always go to church. I should think it very wrong not to do that. I have been confirmed, and learnt well-nigh by heart the Thirty-nine Articles of our Church, the Catechism, and I know not what beside ; and yet it is true, as Miss Grantham says, ‘I am not a Christian.’”

Bessie wrote a note to Miss Grantham, thanking her for the kind manner in which she had written to her ; and, of course, said she was pleased to be considered a friend. And then she told her somewhat of her difficulty with Bernard, for she was feeling very unhappy, and it would seem a relief to confide in some one.

Miss Grantham soon replied. A note was brought to her. She read,—

“I feel very much for you, dear, in the trial that has overtaken you. Believe me, I sympathize with you with all my heart. I trust, if it be the Lord’s will, the heavy cloud may pass, and that the fullest confidence may be restored between you ; for unless there be perfect trust, there can be no true love. But if the result should be as you fear, dearest Bessie, it is your Father’s doing : He knows what is best for you. Give Him your heart, and

nothing can really go wrong: you will see the wisdom of all afterwards.

"Come to see me whenever you can and like: you will always find a hearty welcome. Thank you, dear, for feeling towards me as a friend: I wish to prove myself really such. God bless you, dear Bessie, and comfort your heart. With much love,

"Believe me,

"Always your loving Friend."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A VISIT FROM BERNARD.

“**W**ILL you be away long?” asked Edmund of his brother Bernard one morning; for that gentleman had come to the conclusion that he must go and see Bessie, and if possible restore confidence between them. He was very harassed and perplexed at this time with business matters, for his late father had left no will, and his affairs were rather complicated; and amidst it all came this trouble with Bessie. He did not know how to bear up; so, after some consideration, he had informed his brother of his intention, which caused the foregoing question.

“I will not remain away longer than I can help at present, Edmund. In a business point of view, I ought not to go at all; but I shall be in no condition for anything until I have seen Bessie.”

“Well, I hope you may soon return, and be in a

more satisfactory frame of mind. Cheer up, old boy: do not be so down-hearted. There are plenty more young ladies. Why make such a fuss over one?"

"Ah, why, indeed!" thought Bernard. "But, then, he cannot know how I feel; for, I am sure, he has never loved any one like I love Bessie."

But he answered not, and the brothers parted.

Bernard had written to Bessie, telling her he should come, if possible. She was very glad, not having been very well, but was better now; and the prospect of a visit from him put her into better spirits. Bernard was sadly agitated on his arrival, and paced up and down Bessie's little room, explaining and talking to her. He thought she seemed very indifferent, and was just beginning to feel desperate, when Bessie's saucy, playful manner came to the rescue; for, seeing how much Bernard was overcome, she suddenly rose from her seat, placed herself in front of him—thus stopping him in his pacing—exclaiming, with a smile, "Well, that was a long speech!"

Bernard's arms were soon round her neck, and her head drooped on his shoulder, and then all was explained and forgiven. You may be sure it required no small effort on Bernard's part to tear himself away again. His only comfort was that he would lose no time in endeavouring to conclude his

business, so as to be again with Bessie, and make the necessary arrangements for having her altogether. So Bernard went back with a lighter heart, and his brother Edmund was pleased to see it: he only hoped it might last. And Bessie: what did she think about it? She was rather perplexed sometimes, for she did not understand exactly what Bernard meant by calling himself a "free-thinker," and then she tried hard to dismiss the subject from her mind.

"I am not a true Christian myself, and what matters whether Bernie is Jew or Christian?"

But conscience, once awakened, is not so easily tranquilized, and consequently she felt troubled and unsettled. Of course she acquainted Miss Grantham of Bernie's visit and the result, and that lady was glad to see her young friend happy again, so far as a reconciliation had taken place; but she lost no time or opportunity of inviting Bessie to become a true and humble follower of the Lord Jesus.

Bessie wrote Fanny a long letter, telling her all about Bernard's visit, and her work at the old school; and then entered into some particulars about Miss Grantham, saying how very good and kind she was, and what a truly Christian person.

Poor Fanny had not been well: college work

seemed too much for her ; she was home-sick likewise.

Bessie inclosed Miss Grantham's first letter, so that Fanny could better understand her character ; and, in her reply, Fanny writes,—

“Many thanks, dearest Bessie, for letting me have such a nice long letter. I have been too ill to keep up correspondence with any one but yourself and mother ; consequently, I receive no other letters, as I have so many unanswered. My dear, I must say I feel rather prejudiced against Miss Grantham, though I feel I ought to like her, for being kind to and interested in you. How I do wish I could come home ! I should soon get well then ; but still I do not want to be obliged to leave, either, as, of course, I should lose much time with my studies. But I am almost sure I shall never be able to stand the college routine two years. Thank you, dear, for sending me that letter. What Miss Grantham says I believe is quite true : nothing in this world can make us happy. We may think we are happy while prosperity lasts ; but when troubles and disappointments come, how are we to bear them ? Then we repine. Oh, Bessie dear, that I could feel I was a child of God ! It has caused me many unhappy hours because I cannot ; and yet, dear, what privileges we have had and still remain in doubt ! If we could only submit our will to our

heavenly Father, how much happier we should be ! But at present I cannot say from my heart in everything 'Thy will be done.' May God help us both to decide for Him. Write again soon, and tell me how you are getting on."

Things went on pretty smoothly with Bessie now for a time, but she remained undecided in that all-important matter. She was very quiet and thoughtful, and no doubt the influence of Miss Grantham was taking some effect. You would scarcely recognise Bessie now as the high-spirited, gay, and thoughtless girl we first introduced to our readers ; for she could not be altogether happy, nor was she likely to be while she left the all-important matter unanswered. It is not true religion that causes a person to feel dull and melancholy : it is the halting between two opinions. Many persons are tolerably happy, the same as Bessie was, until conscience is awakened ; and then, till a decision is arrived at, there does not seem much peace. But when Christ is accepted as our own Saviour, then, indeed, we have peace and happiness. Jesus says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye might have peace." "My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Shortly afterwards, however, a change seemed

gradually to come over Bessie, and she began to feel as if she could trust in the Lord Jesus, and take Him for her guide and comforter. This was brought about, no doubt, in a great measure, through Miss Grantham's influence and prayers on Bessie's behalf, and she went frequently with that lady to some revival meetings that were then being held in the town. However, Bessie was led to confess "Christ for me." Miss Grantham rejoiced exceedingly, thanked God, and took courage in her work, praying that He would deign to use her humble instrumentality in winning souls to His honour and glory.

Bessie wrote to Bernard and Fanny, telling them of the change she had experienced, and how happy she felt, now that she had decided to be a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. Bernard does not fully comprehend what Bessie means, as, I am afraid, she does not give him very lucid information. He wrote for further particulars as to the nature of the change, and what had caused it.

"Of course," he said, "you know I feel interested enough in you to wish to know all that concerns yourself."

Fanny writes,—

"My dear, you have settled that all-important point, and here am I still wavering. Pray for me."

And now other changes took place ; for Miss Grantham informed her young friend she was about to leave the school, and thought of going to Great Malvern. Bessie felt rather sorry at this announcement, and said she did not think she would care to go to the school after Miss Grantham had left.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN UNEXPECTED OFFER.

WHERE is Miss Lee?" inquired several students one of another. "There is a gentleman in the hall asking for her."

Fanny guessed who it was, and hastened to meet him.

Bernard had called to see how she was, hearing she had been ill, and likewise he thought she would soon be seeing Bessie. Bernard scarcely knew how to spare the time, but Bessie wished him to go. Fanny asked him into one of the class rooms, where the gas was burning low. Thinking she would have a better light by turning it on a little more, she proceeded to do so ; instead of which, by turning the wrong way, it went out, leaving herself and Bernard in the dark. Fanny felt ready to cry with vexation at her stupidity, but begged Bernard to excuse her. He immediately produced a wax

match from his pocket, and relighted the gas. Fanny felt in no mood for much conversation, although Bernard tried to make her feel easy, and not to mind the little mishap. Poor Fanny got well laughed at by her fellow-students, and Bessie was highly amused when both Bernard and Fanny wrote to her about it.

Holidays came, but passed all too quickly for our young friends. Miss Grantham left the school, so likewise did Bessie. The former did not go to her new school very soon, but remained in London sometime, and became quite a frequent visitor at the College, where she was very fond of going, as she could speak and have prayer meetings with the dear girls. Of course Miss Grantham took special interest in Fanny, being one of Bessie's friends. On the last occasion of Miss Grantham having a prayer meeting at the College, Fanny writes,—

“I really do love Miss Grantham now, though, you know, I tried hard not to do so at first. How I wish she was going to remain in London! Last night I had just finished writing a letter, when some of the students mentioned the prayer meeting, and said Miss Grantham was going to conduct it. I went in; and very glad I am that I did: she spoke so nicely. Several were in tears. And when we came out, I heard one of the young ladies ask Miss Grantham to pray for her. Miss Grantham

told us that it was four years ago that night since those meetings were commenced, and that she conducted it then; and now, most likely, this would be her last time among them, as she was going away, and next year all would be strangers to her. I suppose, dear Bessie, you will hear from her as soon as she is settled in her new sphere of labour."

Bessie was looking forward to hearing, as she felt lonely again now, but kept her time pretty well employed in letter-writing. In fact that, at present, seemed her principal occupation.

"Another letter for you, Bessie," said her mother. "I think you have more than your share. Who is this one from?"

Bessie examined the post mark—North Malvern.

"Oh, mother dear, it is from Miss Grantham! I am so glad. I will read it to you."

"My dear Bessie,

"I daresay by this time you are quite expecting to hear from me. I should have written before, but, as you may imagine, my time is fully occupied. I think I may say, by God's blessing, I am getting on pretty well here. I like the children very well. They are exceedingly easy to manage, and willing to learn. The great thing is, I often feel so very lonely. But God has been very good to me: He has vouchsafed to me a large

measure of His comfort and blessing. Oh, dear Bessie, cling to Jesus! He is an all-sufficient and ever-present Saviour. His love knows no change: He can never fail nor die. His Spirit is the great, all-precious comforter. Do you know, dear, I am looking forward already to being again in dear old London, among old scenes, and seeing old faces. You must write to me soon, dear, and tell me all about yourself, and what your plans are for the future. My teachers here are not like the dear ones I left behind. How I wish I had you here to take a walk, for it is really very lovely. The scenery is very fine, as, no doubt, you have heard. Give my love to the young friends at the school, and, with much love to yourself, believe me, dear Bessie, yours very affectionately.”

Bessie's mother remarks,—

“Miss Grantham wants to know what your plans are for the future. I do not think you know them yourself; do you, Bessie?”

“Well, dear mother, you know Bernie and I thought it better to wait now till the beginning of next year, as it would not seem exactly the thing to be married too soon after his father's death; and, you see, the time is getting on now, though, of course, it seems strange to me to be at home doing nothing,—well, comparatively nothing. I would really take a school, if an opportunity offered.”

"Would you? But you might have to go away from home, and I do not think Bernard would like that. And you, my dear, have never been among strangers, that I do not think you would like it either."

An opportunity, however, did occur, sooner than either Bessie or her mother thought possible. A day or two after, she received a letter from Lottie's father, who was a dissenting minister in a small village.

"My dear young friend,

"I hear from my daughter that you are still at home, and, as I know you are very fond of school work, I have taken the liberty of writing to you.

"Last Sunday I was preaching for a gentleman in a seaport town, and he was telling me all about his work. He has a refuge for poor destitute boys, and likewise Sunday and Day Schools. He was inquiring of me if I could recommend him a Christian master. He told me he had tried several masters, but none would stay long, as they could not get on with the children, the boys and girls being of the roughest and lowest class. I said to him, 'Why do you not try a mistress?' 'A mistress!' he exclaimed. 'I never thought of that. Do you think, Mr. Pearson, one could be found that would be able and willing to work in this school?'

"Well, dear Miss Lester, I hope you will forgive me if I have done wrong, but I said, 'I know a lady who could manage your school, if she were willing to come so far from her friends; but I know, likewise, that she would not engage herself for long. She might remain with you till Christmas.'

"Mr. Rooker—that is the gentleman's name—seemed pleased, and asked me if I would be so kind as to write at once, and ask you if you would entertain the idea. He would then immediately forward you all particulars. So now if you will kindly think it over, and let me know, I will write to Mr. Rooker as soon as I know your decision."

"Now, dear mother, what do you think of it?"

"I think, my dear, I shall have nothing whatever to do with it. Do just as you please, and then you cannot blame me if things do not turn out satisfactorily."

"That is kind, now, I must say. Well, I will write and ask Bernie's opinion on the subject. Perhaps he will be as kind as you are, and tell me to do as I please."

Bessie's mother smiled, and said,—

"You know, my dear, you generally get your own way, whatever is said to the contrary."

"Oh, thank you, mother dear! You are very complimentary this afternoon."

Her mother answered,—

“You know, Bessie, as well as I do, that you have been very wilful sometimes; but I must say,” and here she looked fondly at her daughter, “you have been very different lately: quite a comfort to your father and me; and we shall indeed miss you and your merry ways whenever you leave us.”

“I wish,” remarked Bessie, “I had heard of this last week, while Bernie was here; however, I will write to him, as I think I should like to go and work among those poor children.”

So a letter was written, and in due course an answer arrived. Bernard begins his letter in rather a playful manner,—

“My own very dearest Bessie,

“What a nice girl you are, and how very fond of you I am; but you deserve all my fondness, and a great deal more. You cannot tell how much I love you. I wish very much I could make you happier. You will think this is a very curious way to begin a letter; but I am only putting down truthfully my thoughts, just as they rise. I received your precious letter last evening, and, as you may suppose, it has set me thinking a great deal ever since. Now, as regards a fresh subject, I like so much to be candid with you, that I never even wish to conceal my thoughts. My first impression was to echo the sentiment of your

mother, and say, Please yourself; but, almost the next minute, I thought that would be ungenerous and unkind, after you had condescended to ask my advice and opinion, not to let you know my feelings on the subject, whatever they might be. There would be a lack of confidence; and where there is no confidence, there can be little real love. At any rate, loss of confidence is one of the greatest destroyers of love. I daresay, my dearest, you will think I make long enough preamble before coming to the point."

Then Bernard went on to point out some of the disadvantages; and he also seemed afraid the work might be too hard, as Bessie was not very strong.

"However," he added, "I have no doubt that you might do a great deal of good; and I know you like the work. All I hope is, they will not want to keep you there altogether. What would become of poor me, if they persuaded you to stop longer than the time specified?"

I think, on the whole, Bernard would rather Bessie had remained at home; but she decided to write to Mr. Pearson, and ask Mr. Rooker to send particulars, which he was not slow in doing.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BESSIE LEAVES HOME.

MR. ROOKER writes to Bessie,—
“Through the kindness of dear Mr. Pearson, I have heard of your willingness to take charge of my school till Christmas. That is a very short period; yet still the good Lord may send me some one else then, if you should in the order of providence come and go by that time.”

He then goes on to tell Bessie that it is a ragged school, number of children, the hours of attendance, salary, etc.; and then to quote his words,—

“I should like you to come by faith in God, as it is His own work. If you come looking unto Him, He will bless you and repay you for your labour of love. I need not ask for testimonials, as Mr. Pearson has already spoken in the highest

terms of you. Leaving the matter in the hands of the Lord,

“I am, dear friend,

“Yours, etc.”

Bessie soon made all the necessary arrangements for taking her departure, and entering upon her new sphere of labour. Several letters had passed between them, and at last the time was agreed upon when Bessie should go. In the last letter Mr. Rooker writes,—

“All I have to say to you now is, may the blessing of our Lord Jesus come with you, and may you win many a poor little one by the help of His Spirit. I am sure you will meet with a kind reception in the school. I think you will often see Mr. Pearson, as he preaches occasionally at our little chapel.”

Bernard was duly informed of the date fixed for Bessie's departure, and he came to spend the last few days with her. He took her ticket for the train, and saw her comfortably seated for the journey; and then came the Good-bye, and Bernard turned away with a heavy heart, and returned to Bessie's friends.

He was very downcast. A presentiment seemed to pervade his mind that it was an ill day for him when his Bessie went away. Bessie, too, felt rather downcast at first, but soon recovered her

spirits, and enjoyed her journey. It was all fresh ground to her, never having been far from home. She had not seen many places. Bessie was welcomed at the station by the little daughters of Mr. Rooker, and shortly afterwards by that gentleman himself; and, soon feeling at her ease, she was anxious to lose no time in commencing her school duties.

The next day Mr. Rooker and his young daughters accompanied Bessie to the school. It was a beautiful morning in September. This walk took them through part of the principal street. Presently Mr. Rooker turned down a lane, and they appeared to be in the lowest part of the town. He explained, in answer to Bessie's look of inquiry, that in this part a school was much needed, and that at first he only had a cottage or two here, but that afterwards he was enabled to build a school room.

Bessie glanced around. It seemed to be the abode of drunkenness and poverty. You could not go very far without seeing a public-house, outside of which might be seen slatternly women, with dirty little children, coarse young women in gay apparel, and a few soldiers and sailors loitering about. She thought it was not at all a bright prospect to be compelled to traverse these regions two or three times a day, and felt just a little uneasy.

A month or two after this, Bessie was asked, by one of the friends of Mr. Rooker, if she was not afraid to pass down those places, to which she replied,—

“Not at all. I felt just a little nervous when I first came here, but not by any means now. You see, nearly all know who I am, and my object in coming. If there are any standing in the way, they will move aside to let me pass, and perhaps say to one another, ‘Here comes the governess: make room;’ or, ‘Hush!’ if another, who does not know me, begins talking loudly or swearing. I think if any one interfered with me in that neighbourhood, there would be a pitched battle.”

Dear readers, this was no exaggeration on the part of Bessie, as many who knew her could testify.

Oh, then, may God grant that this may be an encouragement to any who might like to labour among this class, but yet feel almost afraid to venture into the low districts, where, necessarily, these schools are situated!

Only those, I think, who have laboured among this class can tell of the love and devotion of these neglected children of poverty to their teachers, and how sometimes the teachers’ hearts are cheered by seeing the poor children trying to look clean and decent, and by their willingness to be

taught about Jesus. His love can melt all hearts. Oh, if you can gain some of these little ones for Christ, you know not what good you are the means of doing, as they in their turn will tell some others of His love; so you will be amply repaid, even in this world, by the joy it will bring into your own soul for any sacrifice you may have made!

All honour to those noble souls who interest themselves in ragged schools!

It is a glorious work; but it is only those who love the great Teacher themselves who would have sufficient courage to overcome the difficulties that present themselves. Our missionaries, Scripture readers, and Bible women can venture into districts where, perhaps, a stranger would be afraid to pass through. And why is this? Ah, those poor, forlorn ones soon know that no mercenary motives bring them into those localities, but that they come out of love to them and their Master.

But, at the same time, dear friends, do not think it is a very easy matter: it requires much patience, perseverance, and, above all, much love and prayer, or the work cannot succeed. And, then, oftentimes the labourers' hearts are grieved; for, where they thought some good had been done, they find it was only like the seed that fell by the way-side, that the fowls of the air soon devoured.

But labour on faithfully, even if you do not see the fruit of your labour. Rest assured the good seed is not entirely lost.

“ Sow in the morn thy seed,
At eve hold not thy hand ;
To doubt and fear give thou no heed,
Broadcast it o'er the land,
Beside all waters sow,
The highway furrows stock ;
Drop it where thorns and thistles grow,
Scatter it on the rock.

“ Thou canst not toil in vain ;
Cold, heat, and moist, and dry
Shall foster and mature the grain
For garners in the sky.
Thence, when the glorious end,
The day of God, is come,
The angel reapers shall descend,
And heaven cry, ‘ Harvest home ! ’ ”

MONTGOMERY.

Christian teachers and visitors are much needed in all our poor and densely crowded districts. If, by reading the foregoing remarks, any should be induced to become teachers or visitors in any of our own poor neighbourhoods, the writer would indeed bless God that these words have been written.

The school in which Bessie was now about to labour was commenced in a very small way by Mr. Rooker, who invited a few poor lads, and taught them in his own house. But the numbers who were anxious to come increased so rapidly

that other premises were required; and so, with the assistance of a few Christian friends, money was raised, and some old cottages that happened to be for sale were bought and used for this purpose. Mr. Rooker was greatly encouraged; and, by faith and prayer, contributions were sent in, and, eventually, a nice school room was built on the site of the dilapidated cottages. This was the room that Bessie was now about to teach in. Though the work had gone on prosperously, and there was a good attendance at the school, the room was used occasionally for other purposes: for mothers' meetings, prayer meetings, and, on the Sunday, evangelistic services; so that those connected with it had no idle time. There was always plenty of work that could be done.

We have made rather a long digression, which we trust our readers will excuse. But to return to our story.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE NEW RAGGED SCHOOL.

MR. ROOKER and Bessie arrived at the school, where, as might be expected, a group of children of both sexes, and I was going to say of all ages, were assembled. The elder boys might be about sixteen years, and the younger not more than three. Mr. Rooker explained that the big boys only came occasionally, when at home ; being sailors, they sometimes went on short voyages ; but whenever opportunity offered, they always seemed pleased to attend the old school.

The school is now opened by the children singing a hymn ; and after Mr. Rooker had engaged in prayer, he introduced Miss Lester to them as their new teacher, and requested them to show her how they could sing. And sing indeed they did, for they raised their voices and shouted most lustily. The chorus of the piece they had chosen ran thus :—

“ We love the Ragged School,
We love the Ragged School :
We want to get some learning,
Our bread we would be earning,
Our time to profit turning,
And so we come to school.”

Bessie was very glad when they had finished. She had never been in that sort of school before, and the noise and confusion made her feel rather desperate. She thought, “ Shall I ever be able to make anything of this school? But, with God’s help, I will try.” She had anxiously watched the proceedings; and while the hymn was being sung, she was astonished to see the boys and girls come noisily in, the former throwing up their caps, to lodge on any peg they thought fit.

After the prayer, a dirty looking woman stood in the door-way, and called out very lustily, “ I say, Sal, your mother wants you.” Without asking permission, away runs Sal, much to the dismay of Bessie.

Mr. Rooker was preparing to take his departure, when Bessie said, “ Just one thing more I wish to ask you, sir. You will leave this school entirely to my management.”

“ Oh, certainly,” replied that gentleman. “ No one will interfere with you in the slightest degree. And as for myself, I have every confidence.” And then he wished them all “ Good morning,” and Bessie was left to face her difficult task.

She began, "Now, my dear boys and girls, we shall not be able to begin any regular lessons this morning; but I should just like to have a little quiet talk with you. Before doing so, however, I shall be compelled to ask you a few questions. What is this for?" pointing to the bell on the table.

"For silence," answered some one.

"Quite right. But, do you know, when I heard that bell used just now there was anything but silence in the room, and I thought you must have misunderstood its use."

Silence reigned now, while Bessie was speaking, and the children were staring at her as if she were quite a novelty; and so she was to them. Her kind and firm tone soon won their attention: not but that they had heard kind words from those who came to speak to them before; yet still it seemed strange to be under a mistress, when they had been used to a master.

Bessie went on to tell them that whatever they were doing, either reading, talking, or even crossing the room, directly the bell sounded, silence must prevail. And then followed several illustrations: for instance, in the middle of singing a little piece Bessie rang the bell; some stopped, others did not seem to understand. She then explained to them that before they could learn anything properly they must understand obedience.

"However," she thought to herself, "it will not do to be too hard on them this morning; for to make them sit still so long would indeed seem a punishment. I must not expect to do much with them at present." But her heart went up in silent prayer for guidance. And next she talked a little while about one of the Bible stories; and then the time drew near for dismissal.

Bessie was indeed glad, for she felt tired already; but thought she would be all right when she had rested. Mr. Rooker anxiously inquired how she had got on. Bessie said she could hardly tell; but his little daughters were quite enthusiastic about the way Miss Lester had managed.

In her first letter to Bernard she writes,—

"I am afraid I shall not be able to do much with this school. You know I have been accustomed to teaching poor children; but they were quiet and respectable compared with these wild Arabs."

In his reply he says,—

"I am sure if any one can do anything with these poor children it is yourself: you are sure to gain their love and confidence, and then you will be able to influence them for good."

And Bernard was right. At the end of a week's hard work the school was brought into something like working order. Mr. Rooker's daughters, and one of the elder boys from the refuge, were willing

assistants, and soon learnt to love and respect Bessie, as indeed did all in the school ; so much so, that on the following December, when they had a public examination, she was congratulated on all sides on the success which had attended her efforts.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BERNARD'S FIRST VISIT TO BRIDGEPORT.

BESSIE found her time pretty fully occupied ; for, besides her school work, there were meetings that she liked to attend sometimes, if she could ; and last, but not least, she had a fair share of correspondence : Fanny and Miss Grantham wanting to know all the news, home letters to be answered, and, of course, Bernard's. That individual writes, that he is getting very low-spirited and out of sorts, "As I generally do," he adds, "when I stay away too long from you. I must endeavour to pay you a visit shortly."

Bessie was very happy in her work, though sometimes a little discouraged : for instance, soon after her work commenced in that school one morning, two of the elder boys began fighting, and she happened to be at the other end of the room talking to some little ones. Hearing an unusual

noise, Bessie looked in the direction from which it came, and then saw how very angry the two boys were getting with each other: one had actually taken off his heavily-nailed boot, with which to strike his companion. She immediately went between them, and in firm, but kind, tones, bade them take their seats. The boy with the uplifted boot looked defiantly at her for a moment, but her look of sorrow quite disarmed him, and the two slunk quietly into their respective seats. All Bessie said to them at the time was, "I wish you both to remain in after school is dismissed."

Did they stay? you will, perhaps, ask. Oh, yes! And then Bessie talked kindly to them, and said, how vexed she was to see them give way to such temper, and told them how grieved their Father in heaven must be at their conduct. Alas, poor boys, they had not heard much of that tender Father's love, except in school! Then Bessie offered up a simple prayer with them: they were both broken-hearted,—love had subdued them, and melted their hearts, where scarcely any amount of hard words or punishment would have been of any avail. The victory was gained by love, and these two boys turned out to be two of Bessie's most loving, devoted, and obedient pupils.

The school continued to progress, and the teacher became a general favourite, not only with

the children, but with the poor people in the neighbourhood. She entered so energetically into her work that it soon began to tell upon her health ; and when Bernard came shortly afterwards, he was pained to see the change in her appearance. Bessie told him in her letters that she was not very well ; but that sometimes she was able to take recreation, and quite enjoyed the holiday on Saturdays, when occasionally Mr. Rooker would take her and his little daughters for a trip on the water. He had his own boat, and was teaching some of the elder boys to row ; and how pleased these poor boys seemed when they had their teacher with them, and how proud they were of their ability, and with what satisfaction they informed Bessie that they could swim, so that if even the boat capsized she would not be drowned. Bessie told them she hoped their swimming abilities would not be put to the test on her behalf.

Bernard's looked-for visit did not pass off quite so pleasantly as on some former occasions, when Bessie was at her own home. Of course he was very happy to see her, yet he could not tell how it was, but he thought there seemed a little coolness.

"We seem drifting apart again, I am afraid," he said to himself. "The worst of it is, I cannot have Bessie so much to myself. What is it, I wonder ?

There does not seem that freedom and confidence towards me that there formerly was."

Bessie was feeling this too, and scarcely knew how to account for it, excepting that she seemed afraid, in a religious point of view, that Bernard was not her way of thinking. She was wondering and meditating whether she ought not to give him up. Ah, Bessie, if you could have summoned up courage then, and been kind and straightforward, how much pain and bitterness of spirit you might have saved Bernard, and how much sorrow you might have saved yourself! But she allowed him to leave without imparting any of her ideas and altered feelings towards him in this respect, thinking, perhaps, that she could better write it than tell it.

Bernard bade Bessie adieu reluctantly. There was a heaviness at his heart; but he thought, "I shall feel better after I have had a letter, perhaps." He wrote to her directly, telling her of his safe arrival, and that he had seen her friends, and was looking forward most anxiously to hear from her.

After he was gone, Bessie tried to reflect quietly, and come to a conclusion how she ought to act. "What ought I to do?" she asked herself. And then she prayed.

"Oh God, my heavenly Father: do Thou in mercy guide me into the right path; and may it

please Thee graciously to reveal Thyself to him for whom I pray. May Bernard be led to see Jesus as his Saviour, and the only true Messiah."

And then continuing her reflections,—

"It seems very hard, but I am afraid it is my duty to give Bernard up; for I know St. Paul says, 'How can two walk together, except they be agreed?' And again, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' When I became engaged I was not a decided Christian myself, but I pledged myself to him. Ought I to break that pledge?"

She was so long considering what she ought to do, and how to write to Bernard, that the days passed, and he was getting into a feverish state of anxiety, for he was afraid she must be ill. At length Bessie summoned up courage, and wrote a long letter, telling him of her objections; and, therefore, she thought their engagement had better be broken off, as he was not a Christian. This letter was not so kind as it might have been, considering that she still loved Bernard; but young converts, as a rule, are apt to be very hasty in drawing their conclusions, and too ready to condemn the conduct of others,—not but that Bessie felt very sorrowful, and it made her feel quite ill, for she knew Bernard must think it a cruel and unkind letter. But she was very glad when it was posted, and hoped she would hear from him again before long.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A SECOND VISIT.

“SATURDAY evening, and no letter from Bessie. What can it mean?” soliloquized Bernard. “Last Monday I returned, and I have not heard anything of her since. She has never kept me so long without a letter. I will just take a walk, and see Mrs. Lester : perhaps she has heard from her daughter.”

After the usual greetings, he asked, anxiously,—

“Have you heard from Bessie at all this week?”

“No, indeed,” answered Mrs. Lester. “Have not you?”

Bernard replied in the negative. Mrs. Lester felt rather concerned, especially as Bernard had intimated before that he was afraid the work was too hard for Bessie, and that she did not look nearly so well as when she left home. At length, after further conversation, Bernard said,—

“I think I must go and see her again to-morrow.

I cannot bear this suspense, and I feel I cannot wait until Monday ; for I am afraid she must be ill, or she would not have delayed writing to us both."

You see by this that Bessie's last letter had not yet reached Bernard.

Judge of Bessie's consternation when informed on the Sunday that Mr. St. Vincent had again called to see her. She was not well: the excitement had been too much for her, and she was trying to rest, and be as quiet as possible on this Sunday. But this sudden announcement made her feel worse. She felt she could not see him then, but told the housekeeper to ask him to call again at a certain time, which he did.

Poor Bernard wandered about in a most forlorn condition. The weather was anything but favourable for so doing. At the appointed time he again presented himself.

In the meantime, Bessie had written a note, wherein she informed him that she had previously sent him a long letter, and she was not pleased at his coming to see her on the Sunday. Oh, Bessie, Bessie, your note is anything but kind: your conduct is indeed harsh, methinks!

Bessie had considered, before writing, whether she should try and see Bernard, but felt she could hardly trust herself. Her courage would fail, she felt sure, if she saw his grief.

Bernard read the note. Could it be from Bessie,—his loving Bessie? You may, perhaps, form some idea of the effect it had upon him, and how wretched he felt, by the following note, written in pencil, hastily, before he left the town,—

“My ever dearest Bessie,

“I am writing this in more agony of spirit than you can possibly imagine. I never intended to have come down here on a Sunday for its own sake; and I am quite sure I never intended to do anything that would be disagreeable to you. My dearest, in your zeal, as I have said before, you do not consider extenuating circumstances. I had not heard from you since I last saw you here. Think, oh, think what weather it was! Would I choose to come if I were not terribly anxious? I went to your mother’s last night, and if she had heard from you I should not have come. I left you unwell. You know not the punishment of being unable to see you, and the affliction it is to me; and I know not the consequences. But I hope, dear, you will be better soon. Do not be uneasy about me, dearest. Think of one Sunday on the same ground. How happy I felt! Now how ill and miserable!

“I remain ever yours,

“Though you may not be mine,

“WRETCHED BERNARD.”

Bessie could not control her tears. They fell thick and fast over this note, for her conscience seemed to whisper, and she felt that she had behaved, perhaps, more harshly to him than was necessary. "Bernard must think I am indeed cruel, and my heart is aching too; but I want to do what is right." And then she prayed most earnestly that they both might be comforted, and leave their affairs in the hands of One who is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THAT memorable Sunday evening Bernard called on Bessie's friends. He would gladly have been excused doing so, but he had promised to let them know how he found Bessie.

He tried hard to conceal his grief; but her mother knew in a moment that something was amiss, and began to feel alarmed. Bernard, as well as he could, told her of some of the events of the day. Mrs. Lester was angry and indignant with her daughter for treating him thus, and she tried to comfort him; for this good little sympathizing woman had learnt to love Bernard dearly; and to see him so disconsolate, quite broke her heart. Bernard hastened away: the scene was too much for him. And he thought if he could once be alone again, in his own quiet room, he might become more composed. He was now looking forward anxiously to receive the letter of

which Bessie had spoken in her note, but none came. It afterwards appeared that she had misdirected it. Then he thought he must write, to let her know that he had not received it, and could not ascertain anything about it. The letter he then wrote was as follows,—

“My very, very dearest Bessie,—

“If I may still be allowed to address you in this way; if not, pray excuse it this time,—in the first place I hope and trust you are better in health, and that you may soon change, and become more like your former self. I will endeavour now to explain a little more what I had no opportunity of doing on Sunday. You must know, my dearest, not having heard from you at all, and leaving you rather unwell, made me think much day and night. Alas, I was in hopes you knew I would not willingly do the slightest thing to cause you displeasure! I did not think it would ever be needful to repeat that assurance; and I left not a stone unturned to avoid coming on Sunday, if possible. I wrote to London, to know if there was a letter for me, and likewise called on your mother the last thing Saturday evening. I could not sleep for uneasiness all through the night; and when the morning came, it was very wet and tempestuous. But I cared not for the storm or wet, and so I started.

“The housekeeper brought me the message you were too unwell to see me then, but would I call at the hour named in your note? I knew not what to do with myself, but still thought I would not return before the time appointed, in order to obey your commands to the letter. I wandered about miserably, till the time had expired, and I was again in hopes of seeing you, if only for a minute; and then to receive that cruel note. Could you have written it? Could you wound so deeply, if you knew it? What a sudden blow! If you had ceased to love me, it might have been more gradually communicated, knowing how sensitive I am. It is not so long ago that you wrote me, before you left B——, to come on a Sunday. Do not take these as reproaches, dear. They are all kindly meant. Only review your conduct, and fancy yourself in my place. I think what I did you would have done; unless, indeed, this short time can have changed you so wonderfully. I thought it my duty to come.

“I understood from your note that you had written me a letter. I have received no letter at all from you since the note Miss Winter gave me. Whatever the contents of that letter may be will make no difference. I am yours, under any circumstances, now and for ever; and under any conditions, not fearing that you will impose wrong

or sinful ones. I know myself too well to waver. But I am hurt, deeply hurt, at the late events; but do not blame you yet. I am very slow to blame now, and make every allowance until I am acquainted with full particulars; but I feel uneasy and apprehensive. Oh, how I wish I could have married when you were willing! I will not delay now, whenever I have the chance. Without you the world is to me a waste and dreary desert. You know not the good you could do with me,—what no one else could. Even the salvation of my soul may depend upon you. Think deeply, then, and spare me. Before you refuse, consider the responsibility, if you wish to do me good. I am, and hope to be always, please God, able and willing to serve you to the utmost of my power to the time when it shall please the Almighty to separate us from this earthly clay. Dare I hope to hear from you again? You might, in kindness, write, acknowledging receipt of this, if you think no more of me. At any rate, I must write to you again when I receive the letter that has been delayed. With fervent prayers for your health and happiness, and in anguish of spirit,

“I remain ever yours,

“BERNARD.”

Bessie was naturally of a loving disposition, and her heart was quite melted at poor Bernard's

sufferings. She looked upon herself at the time as quite a monster to be able to treat any one as she had treated him ; so she hastened to write him a long, kind letter, modifying in a great measure the one she had written formerly. She explained how she lacked courage when she ought to have spoken out truthfully and sincerely what was then on her mind, adding,—

“ My dearest Bernie, if you should, by the Lord’s will, be led to see the same way as I do, ‘ I am still ready to be yours.’ But when you have received my other letter, you will see what more I have written on the subject.”

She soon received the following reply,—

“ My dearest, dearest Bessie,

“ I do not know how to thank you enough for your kindness in writing to me again so soon. I hope I shall be for ever grateful. I was about to leave the town when your letter arrived, containing such good advice and such sincere wishes. I was in a most pitiful state of despondency, and seemed altogether so cast down that every day I remained here I seemed to get worse instead of better. I hope and trust now, please God, with your encouragement, that I may be a great deal better. Already I feel that you have done me a great amount of good, in a religious point of view ; although, of course, as regards my bodily health, I

feel very much shaken, from the great grief I have lately gone through. I hope, dearest Bessie, you feel better than you did. And let this be a consolation to you: that I now take all you have done in good part, and give you credit for the best of motives, although you acted somewhat suddenly and harshly towards me. Henceforth, try and let not your courage fail you in what you know to be right; and delay not. If you had taken the opportunity of speaking your mind to me the evening we were together, a great deal of pain might have been spared me, and you would not have been annoyed and agitated by my coming down on Sunday. In one of my letters, written to you some months ago, I expressed myself to the effect that I hope to benefit by your instructions; but in your modest reply you say that I am better able to instruct you. I knew, even then, that the latter was not the case, as far as regards that most important truth for man to know, the Revelation of the Gospel. You know, according to the Articles of the Jewish Creed, they say, 'We believe with a perfect faith that Messiah will come, and, although His coming be delayed, we will patiently wait His appearance.' This has been said for more than eighteen centuries, and no change has taken place in the Jewish prospects. On the contrary, there have been many converts to Christianity. I could

not understand nor believe that the all-merciful God would be so slow to fulfil His promises, or why those promises should have been made so long before they were destined to be fulfilled. This first shook my faith in their code. And although my late father was very orthodox, and a strict observer of Jewish customs, he never could be brought to argue upon, or to defend, his creed, no doubt, thinking it must be right to follow the religion he was brought up in by his father. However, I do not think the same ; and, moreover, think it would be very wrong of me to wilfully shut my eyes against the dictates of my conscience, when so many things connected with that faith appear to me so very inconsistent. I regret now, very much, the time I have lost, in the presumptuous conceit that it was enough for me to be a "free-thinker," and not follow any particular creed. I am not satisfied to think so now: I feel anything but so with myself. I should like to be at heart a Christian, and to feel that Christ is my Saviour now, and ever careth for me. I esteem very much the meek and submissive way in which you say, 'If I should, by the Lord's will, be led to think in the same way as yourself, you are ready to be mine.' Those are precious, golden words to me, dearest."

Then followed a remark or two concerning circumstances where there appears to have been a

misunderstanding, which might not prove interesting to my readers, therefore I need not enter into them here. I have entered thus far into details in order that it might be better understood how Bernard was gradually led from the Jewish faith to embrace Christianity. He was halting between the two, and at this time had not quite decided which he was to be,—

“JEW OR CHRISTIAN.”

For Bernard was not one of those characters who could be entirely indifferent on religious subjects. If he believed in Judaism, he would conform consistently to the rites and ceremonies of that ancient creed; and if he embraced Christianity, he would be a devoted disciple of that faith.

He added at the close of the letter,—

“I must write to you again, shortly, as I have much to say. In the meantime, with fervent prayers for your health and happiness, and the repeated assurance that I will make it my first study and consideration to endeavour to keep steadfast in the path that leads to forgiveness for my past errors, and, I hope, to put my faith and trust in the Saviour,

“I remain, my very dearest Bessie,

“Yours, ever true and fervent,

“BERNARD.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A DAY'S HOLIDAY.

“OH, Miss Lester, guess, now: we want you to guess something!” exclaimed the little Miss Rookers, one evening.

“No, dear: I cannot. I am too tired to guess anything to-night; and I have several letters to write, that I ought to have written days ago.”

“Well, never mind the letters: they can wait a little longer.”

Bessie smiled kindly, and tried to enter into their fun.

“Well, what is it you want of me?”

“To guess what papa has promised us to-morrow.”

After several attempts, Bessie said,—

“I must give it up: you will have to tell me.”

“Oh, it is so delightful! If it is a very nice fine day, we are going to have a long time on

the water: not just in the harbour, you know, but right out on the open sea."

"That will be very nice for you; but what shall I do in school, if you all desert me?"

"Ah, now," exclaimed the youngest, "that is a secret! But I must tell you, now, you dear, sweet darling, we made papa promise to try and persuade you to go with us. Now, you will: will you not?"

"What is to become of the school, little one?"

"Oh, papa will manage that: will you not, papa?" for that gentleman had just entered the room.

"Manage what, my pet?"

"Why, the school. You know we want Miss Lester to go with us to-morrow."

"I think, Miss Lester," said Mr. Rooker, "as you have not been very well this last few days, if you would like it, the little change might do you good, and my little daughters will enjoy themselves all the more if you are with them. I propose we give the school a day's holiday. Two or three of the elder boys, with our boys from the refuge, which are at home, can go with us."

"I thank you very much, Mr. Rooker. I am very fond indeed of the sea, and I think it will be very nice. The boys will like it, too."

The boys were informed of the pleasant duty

they had to perform, and were in great glee accordingly.

"I wish I was going with you," said one of the small boys in the refuge, when they were talking about it. "But never mind, perhaps I shall earn an extra lot of coppers to-morrow; for, when it is fine, there are such lots of people come on the bridge, and I am always on the look out, you know, to call out, 'Black your boots, sir.'"

And this young gentleman put his hands under his coat tails and strutted across the room, making all the rest laugh aloud; for Bobby was attired in a gentleman's left-off dress coat, and the tails quite amused him. His daily avocation was that of a shoe-black.

"I wonder," said one of the elder boys, "if Miss Lester is going to leave at Christmas."

"Oh, I hope she won't!" they all exclaimed.

"Well, what did that gentleman come to see her for, then? I am afraid he wants her to leave."

"I will go and ask Miss Winter," exclaimed Harry, one of the elder boys that helped Bessie in the school; "she will know."

These boys frequently assisted Miss Winter in some of the household duties. So they went into the kitchen to see if she wanted them for anything, but it was merely an excuse to ask about Miss Lester.

"I daresay you will be informed soon enough, if Miss Lester intends going; but it is rather impertinent of you to ask questions. But I suppose it is because you like her, and do not want her to leave."

"What are you doing, Harry? How very ridiculous of you!"

The boy coloured exceedingly: he did not think he was noticed. What had he done? A wrap was left in the kitchen to-day to dry, for Bessie had been caught in the rain. The boy knew it was hers, and reverently took it up and kissed it, which caused the foregoing remark from the housekeeper. Miss Winter duly reported it to Bessie, who felt sorry the boy was noticed, for the others did not fail to tease him for his devotion to her.

The boating expedition duly set out, as the day was moderately fine; but, when they had been out some time, it became very clouded, and Bessie feared there would be a storm. She said,—

"I think we had better turn our attention to returning home."

"Oh, no: not yet!" exclaimed the Miss Rookers. "We thought we should be able to land on that island. Do not ask them to go back yet."

"We are a long way from that island, and it looks stormy. What do you think, Mr. Rooker?"

"I think the same as you do: that we had better return."

This did not please our young friends, nor the boys, who would like to have gone on, and they did all they could to bring Bessie to their way of thinking. But she was firm, and so they had to return. And it was well for them all that they did, for it began to rain heavily just before they landed; and a very severe thunderstorm set in, and the night was exceedingly tempestuous. They were all very glad, then, that they had followed Bessie's advice, for they had enjoyed their outing very much; and they soon changed their wet garments, and felt no ill effects.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MORE LETTERS.

“ I AM afraid I have rather neglected Fanny,” thought Bessie, as she was finishing a letter to that young lady. “ I do not know what she will think of me. I wish I could have a talk with her ; but she will understand something of my difficulty when she reads my letter. Ah, this is a letter from mother. She thinks I have been more unkind than there was any occasion for. Ah, dear little mother, your daughter is not so good as you are. Your Bessie will never be like her mother ; but I wish to do what is right. And still, with it all, I am afraid I am a very selfish creature, and I am sure I have a great deal more love and kindness showered upon me than I deserve.”

Fanny soon answered Bessie's letter. She writes,—

"My darling Bessie,

"Last week I did not receive one letter from you: the first time such a thing has occurred since I have been at college. I am sure I ought to have two this week; but really, dear, I could not think what had happened to cause you to keep me so long: I thought you must be ill. I am sorry, dear, to hear you have not been well, but glad you are better now. My dear, I hope you will be led to act wisely and kindly with dear Mr. St. Vincent. I pity him so much, for I know more almost than any one else can know how deep and true his love for you is. I hope, dear, you will have strength to go through this trial, if called upon to do so; for, darling, if you give him up, even though you feel it your duty to do so, it will be no easy task, for you cannot help loving and having sympathy for one so kind and tender as he is to you. Write soon, and tell me all the news.

"I remain,

"Your loving friend,

"FANNY."

"Ah, Fanny, I know Bernard is a favourite of yours. But I really do wish he had not been brought up to the Jewish faith; 'but then,' as he says, 'people cannot help how they are born,' and he does really seem as if he would like to be a Christian. I hope he will get that first letter I

wrote, as I mentioned several things in that ; but I do not think he will keep me long waiting when he has received it."

Which he did not. This was his reply,—

"My very, very dearest Bessie,

"I know not how to begin, or what to write first: I have so much I wish to say to you. I have received the letter. I have read it and re-read it many times, and carefully considered its contents, before I attempted to answer it. In fact, it had such an effect upon me that it was some time before I could compose myself sufficiently to write at all. You little know what I have suffered, and still suffer. You little dream how I have loved you, and still love ; and how I feel that I shall always do so under any conditions, circumstances, or treatment I may receive from you. I was not altogether unprepared for the substance of your letter. I feel for you, and highly commend you for acting up to the dictates of your conscience in this matter. It was for that I so highly valued you,—for your moral worth ; but still, my dearest, allow me, in the most submissive and humble manner, to point out where you have been too severe upon me ; and censure from you when undeserved is very difficult to bear. I feel it most acutely. I never thought anything you could have said or done would have taken the effect it has : it

is the assertion, that 'I take no pleasure in going to the house of God.' Is it not going too far to assert that? How do you know? I now at once boldly contradict that assertion, and feel that I can do so conscientiously. I value earthly pleasures very little, and God knows my mind is more often meditating on the future state than on the vanities of this world.

"Then follows the sentence, 'You know you conform to the Jewish persuasion, or, if not fully to that, you are neither one thing nor the other.'

"I do not conform to the Jewish persuasion, not being a believer in that faith, although I have certainly been brought up to that way of thinking; and, indeed, every argument that could possibly be adduced in its favour I have heard, without, as yet, being convinced. When you say 'I am neither one thing nor the other,' to my sorrow, I confess at present this is too true; would it were otherwise! To a reflective and deep-thinking mind like mine, it is not so easy to change one's religion until convinced, from study and the researches of the Holy Scriptures, which is right. To my shame, in my youth I had not studied them as I ought. In after years, business and worldly pursuits diverted my attention from that most sacred duty. Until after being laid on a bed of sickness for some months, I thought but little of my soul. Even on

my recovery, I still clung to the pleasures of this life at times, and, when in society, lacked the courage to face the world's ridicule at what I knew to be right. Since I have known you, however, I have cared less and less for the world; and the more trouble I have, the more I long for the future. I always knew you were better than I,—much better. I always in doubt, you having settled that most important belief according to your conscience. How I have longed to be like you in that respect, and have often wept at the thought that I was not what I ought to be,—a Christian. I love you far too well to risk your happiness, even in a worldly sense; how much more, then, your eternal welfare! I believe I can take credit for never having told you an untruth, having in no way deceived you, or tried to deceive you intentionally. I never thought the temptation to do so would ever present itself in so alluring a form. Thank God, I have strength of mind left now to resist it. I might have said I was a Christian, but the subject is far too serious to be trifled with; therefore, let truth prevail under any circumstances. And this is most implicitly the truth,—I wish to be, but feel that I am not, a Christian, in the proper and full acceptation of the term. I believe I have a better idea of the meaning of a true Christian than you may think I have. How often have I envied that serenity of

mind, that evenness of temper, that deep devotion, and, above all, that resignation and acquiescence to the Divine will in all trials and afflictions, observable in those whom I believe to be faithful followers of Christ!

“The turmoil in my brain now, the extreme agitation at times, and the deploring of my fate at the loss of the only one living I have ever loved, so ardently and fondly as I have you, tells me that I am not what I ought to be, or I would more cheerfully submit to the will of the Almighty,—knowing that whatever happens is for the best,—and say, ‘Thy will, not mine, be done.’ I write it, but I do not feel it. I only hope and pray God, in His mercy, may cause a change to come over me, and direct and guide me in the right path.

“It is rather a singular coincidence that in your letter to me, and my last to you, we should have both made use of the words ‘salvation of soul,’ although I had not seen your letter when I posted mine. I feel sometimes as though I could be a Christian in heart; but it is not a fair test of my feelings now, when the worldly inducement to become one acts so powerfully. No: I will try and cool down a little; and then, if I am one, let it be for Christ’s sake, and not for the love of any mortal. As I now begin to fear I may weary you with so much to read, when you have numerous

duties to attend to, I will draw to a close this lengthy letter. But should you ever change, and think differently towards me, do not—pray, do not—hesitate to let me know. You will always find my heart and hands ready to receive you.

“Should you not succeed any time in your expectations; should any of the troubles that beset mortals fall to your share, in which it is possible I could be of any service to you, I shall always be ready to aid and assist you to the utmost of my power, so long as I have breath. May you continue to do much good, and the good Lord grant you health and strength for it. May the Lord bless and preserve you is the last and heartfelt prayer of one who ever has felt, and still feels, more love for you than any other human being.

“I remain, my very, very dearest Bessie,

“Your ever true and constant,

“Though now discarded,

“BERNARD.”

Bessie does the same with this letter as Bernard said he had done with hers: she read it and re-read it, and then did not seem to know what to write to him. And then she thought, perhaps she need not write at all just yet: she would leave it a little while.

But Bernard soon writes again, for he has received a letter that was misdirected. But Bessie

did not expect any answer to that now, as she had written again afterwards. He says,—

“I wish an opportunity would occur to prove how I love you. A really good opportunity of showing my unchangeable love has not occurred yet. I should like to show what I would go through for you, what I would endure for your sake, and what pains and trouble I would take where I thought it could possibly benefit you. I am not selfish, believe me, nor do I want to have things all my own way. You say in this letter you would rather stay in the school, and do not want to get married yet. I do not wish to hurry you. You waited for me, and of course I will wait for you. And if you never feel inclined, I will try and not blame you then, only I will not marry either. I would, however, rather be a beggar and be near you, than be a rich man and have nothing more to do with you.

“I have had all your letters before me to-day, and that makes me feel so serious. How time rolls on! What troubles and anxieties have I experienced since I first knew you! But, thank God, I am better able to bear them now than I was a year ago. How strange: the very day you wrote the letter explaining your objections to me, on account of my not being a Christian, was exactly a year after the first letter you ever wrote!

Do you recollect? I thought then we should have been married long ere this. When you can spare time I shall be glad to hear from you. I feel so disconsolate now that I cannot write any more ; but, with best and fondest love, believe me to remain

“Your ever faithful

“BERNARD.”

Bessie tried to dismiss Bernard from her mind as much as possible, but she did not forget him in her prayers. But the writing to him again she felt to be an unpleasant task, so she kept putting it off.

A few days after, Bessie had ample time for writing, for she met with a slight accident, and was unable to walk for more than a week. She felt very anxious about her school, but it had to go on without her for a time. She wrote to her mother, and to Fanny ; and she knew how pleased Bernard would have been, had she written to him. But she did not, and poor Bernard writes again,—

“I am extremely anxious to know how you are, fourteen days having elapsed since I last heard. I trust it is not from indisposition that you have been prevented writing. Since I last wrote to you I have been very unwell, or would have written before. Thank God, I am now better, though still very disconsolate. Time does not appear to

reconcile me in the least. I have never been so long without hearing since I have known you, and I feel it very much. I trust soon to have a few lines, and then, perhaps, I may be comforted. I take all sorts of troubles and disappointments as resignedly as I can now, but not so much so as I could wish. I was much enlightened last night by a very good sermon I heard at one of the city missions, wherein it was shown how some passages of Scripture bear a double signification, and how easily it is for the prejudiced to look at things always one way. I must now conclude with best love, and prayers for your happiness.

“Your ever constant

“BERNARD.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FANNY'S REQUEST.

“**W**ELL, I believe I ought to write again to Bernard ; but what to write I am sure I do not know. I wish he did not feel so sad and sorrowful about our separation.”

While these thoughts were passing in Bessie's mind, she received a letter.

“Oh, a letter from Fanny ! I wonder what news she has to write.”

Bessie read,—

“Really, dear, I was in great trouble about you, not hearing from you before.”

“Ah,” says Bessie, “how kind all my friends are ! The worst of it is, they want me to write so often ; and I have lost so much time being at home lately, that I have but little to spare now for letter-writing. Oh, what is this now about Bernard ?”

She reads again,—

"You must excuse me, dear, but I hardly think you are going the right way about Mr. St. Vincent. He came here on Friday evening, for he thought something must be the matter, as he had not heard from you for so long. I eased his mind on that point, as I had heard from you the Friday before; and I told him I should be sure to hear again that evening, and I would write back to you directly. He is coming again this week; so, dear, you must please answer this as soon as possible. I want you either to write to him or enclose a note to him in my letter, or, if not, give me a message of some kind for him. Now, darling, I think you ought to do one or the other; for I think Mr. St. Vincent is worthy of better treatment than he has received at your hands. He looks ill, and seems very unhappy. Now, you will, dear, do one of the three I have named: will you not? And let me have a letter as early as possible. Do not be offended, dear, with me, but write soon to your

"Ever loving friend,

"FANNY."

Of course Bessie was sorry now that she had not written to Bernard before, when she heard he looked ill and unhappy; but still she thought it might be better for both if the correspondence ceased, at any rate, for a time. She took up a little book lying near, and read,—

"There is something within me that thinks of the past,
Of all I have said and have done :
My words and my actions, the first and the last,—
It calls over every one.

"And it looks at the present in innermost thought,
And it pierces my motives all through ;
And it tells me sincerely of all that I ought
In the path of my duty to do.

"My conscience it is, and my God put it there,
To lead me to that which is right :
It calls me to meekness, obedience, and prayer,
And all that is good in His sight.

"Well is it for me that I have such a guide
To keep me from going astray ;
But for this I should wander in wickedness wide :
Let me list to it every day."

EDMISTON.

Bessie laid the book on one side, and set about writing to Fanny. That beautiful text came into her head, "Commit thy way unto the Lord ;" and, again, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." She enclosed a note for Bernard in Fanny's letter. You may, perhaps, gather from the reply something of its contents. Bernard was deeply hurt, and replied in rather a formal style ; but says,—

"It is not that I love you less." And then adds, "I would not have troubled Fanny about our affairs, only you left me so long in suspense, and I had written to you twice without receiving any reply, or even acknowledging the receipt of my letters,

I concluded you were too ill to write. I could not believe you would have acted so unkindly towards me, especially after the kind letter I received from you last. I allowed a fortnight to elapse in the greatest anxiety. Why could you not have written then, if even you wrote in the way you do now? Do I deserve to be treated with such contempt,—I, that would do anything for you? You pride yourself on being a Christian. Look at this behaviour, and see if it is in character with what you profess. You could have given me some consolation when I so much needed it, knowing how I value it from you. At the same time, you might have stated firmly your intention not to be united, unless you were convinced that I was a true and sincere Christian. I am not unreasonable, and, of course, only desire your happiness; and not for you to spend your days in sorrow. Can you for a moment suppose I would weigh my own temporary earthly happiness against your eternal welfare, when I know you are acting according to the dictates of your conscience? And when you follow that infallible guide you must be acting right, even if unknowingly you do wrong. I never wanted you to be my wife until you were convinced I was of the same way of thinking, and loved and thought as much of the blessed Saviour as you do. You wrong me if you think I could be such a monster as to

pretend what I do not feel,—to deceive you. It may seem strange, but, in reality, it is not so strange as the change that has recently come over you. For years I have felt I was not what I ought to be, or what I wished to be; but I had been brought up differently. And you, although brought up always in the love and fear of God, acknowledge, to use your own words, ‘I do not believe I had a spark of love for religious things before, but went to church because I thought it was proper and respectable: now I go from love.’

“May God help me to submit patiently to His will. Forgive me if I have written anything harsh or blunt in this letter. I have lost no time in answering; and, my feelings being wounded, I give vent to them. With ever best and fondest wishes for your health and eternal happiness, and wishing, most sincerely, ever to remain

“Your friend,

“B. ST. VINCENT.”

Bessie read the letter several times, and then laid it aside, thinking how very different it was to any of the many she had formerly received; and she could not help feeling very sorrowful as she thought there was an end now of receiving any more looked-for and loving letters. “Well, for the present, I must leave it,” thought Bessie. “I do not see that I can write, or say anything more. I shall,

no doubt, feel very lonely ; but I must not dwell upon it. I have plenty of work ; and all things may yet come right. So she wrote to her mother and to Fanny, telling them that her engagement with Bernard St. Vincent was at an end ; and that, God helping her, she should now devote herself to the work of the school, and for the present, at least, remain in Bridgeport.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CLOSE OF ANOTHER YEAR.

IT was now the middle of November, and you will, perhaps, call to mind that Bessie's engagement with Mr. Rooker would terminate at Christmas. She informed that gentleman of what had passed between herself and Mr. St. Vincent, and that as at present she had no thought of marriage, she was at liberty to remain longer in his school, if he thought it desirable.

"My dear Miss Lester," replied Mr. Rooker, "I shall be most happy to accept your services for a longer time, for I and my friends were regretting that you would have to leave us so soon. May the good God comfort your heart, and give you joy and prosperity in your work among our poor children. I can assure you I am relieved of a great anxiety; for to find one able and willing to

work in this school is no easy task, although I expect I shall shortly be obliged to have a master. You were suggesting the other day the possibility of dividing the school into two, as it is increasing so fast. And, of course, as you say, those big boys and girls ought to have separate schools. We must talk this matter over. I am afraid, though, the boys will not like your leaving them, and taking the girls and infants only. However, we shall go on the same as we have done until the new year."

Bessie entered very energetically into her work, and was preparing her scholars for a public examination, which was to take place before the Christmas holidays. But did she forget Bernard? Oh, no: her thoughts often wandered to him; and she thought she should like to know how he was getting on! But she heard nothing. And Bernard: how did he feel? Did he forget Bessie? Oh, no: he could not do that! He felt deeply grieved, and thought Bessie had been very harsh and severe. But he still loved her; and to forget and cease to love her he felt would be impossible. He was sad and restless, and felt he must try something by way of change.

"What are you going to do?" asks Edmund of his brother one evening, when Bernard had informed him he could not remain in London

any longer. "You will not think any more of Miss Lester, I hope. I am not very much surprised. I only wish you did not care anything about her. Try and forget her: there are plenty more ladies, my boy. Come, cheer up. What: do you tell me you intend leaving London? And where do you think of going?"

"Well, Edmund, I have been offered an appointment by Burt and Co., to go on the Continent, and I think I cannot do better than accept it. It will be an entire change; and, as I do not feel very well, it may be beneficial to my health."

"I hope it may," replied Edmund; "but I am sorry to have to part. It is company to have you here, and our mother and sisters will miss you very much."

"Yes: I know," said Bernard; "but I cannot help it. I think it is best for me. I do not suppose I shall be away very long the first time."

And so it was settled. Bernard accepted the appointment, and shortly after left London for Paris. And there we shall leave him for awhile, and see how the time passed with Bessie.

Christmas drew on apace, and Bessie was looking forward once more to seeing her dear mother and friends in Brinybeach. She writes,—

"My dear mother, I am longing to see you all again. Next week we are going to give the

children a tea, and then we break up for a fortnight. I hope the examination at the school will pass off well. I will tell you all the news when I come."

The week passed; and the examination took place. The friends were delighted, and congratulations were showered in upon Bessie from all sides; and it was agreed that as the school had so much increased and flourished under Bessie's rule, henceforth there should be two schools,—one for boys only, and another for girls and infants.

Bessie was going home to spend her Christmas, though, for some things, she would like to have remained where she was; for a kind lady in the neighbourhood sent Mr. Rooker ten pounds, to give the children a Christmas dinner. And that gentleman with his family gave up their own comfortable fireside, and came to the school to see that the children enjoyed the good things that the gift of the generous lady had provided for them. A small sum ten pounds may seem to those who have plenty; but, oh, how many hearts were gladdened by this gift!

It was, indeed, a joyful Christmas for those children: plenty of roast beef and plum-pudding. And then the company being together in the dear old school room. How they described the fun and

enjoyment to their kind teacher on her return, and what lusty cheers they raised for the lady who had thought of them and given the money! They were not likely to forget, or be unthankful.

Bessie, once more at home, seemed to miss Bernard, and her mother reproached her with unkindness, and described Bernard's grief on his return from her. Mrs. Lester had received a letter from him, telling her of Bessie's wish for the engagement to be broken off; but that he would always love her daughter, and would renew the engagement at any time. She was not to think it unkind, but he felt he could not visit her any more. He would go away for a change, as his health was suffering, in consequence of his trouble. Bessie thought she should be glad when the holidays were over. "For there is nothing like plenty of work," thought she, "when the mind is troubled."

Of course Fanny had come home likewise, and the two young friends had plenty to say to each other. Fanny was not going to return to college, as her health was too indifferent. Her medical adviser thought a quiet school in the country would be better for her. She was sorry, as she would have much liked another year's training.

"I suppose I ought to be thankful, though, that I have got on as well as I have in the time. I hope I shall get strong, and obtain a good school,

so as to have my dear widowed mother with me, who has deprived herself of many things for my sake; and now, with God's help, I should like to work for her. How I wish, dear Bessie, we could take schools near each other! But you like your work where you are very much: do you not?"

"Oh, yes: more than I thought I should when I began. I am longing to be at it again; for mother and all at home keep talking to me about Bernard, and it makes me feel quite wretched."

"Do you know, dear, where Mr. St. Vincent is now?"

"No: I have no idea. I have not heard anything since the reply to the note forwarded in your letter; but I trust he is better. My mother describes him as being very sadly."

"Now, dear," said Fanny, "I do not want to grieve you; but I think you might have given him hope that, at some future time, you would have him. Do you know, dear, I really believe he was seeking and anxious to become a follower of Christ. I liked him almost as soon as I knew him; and I hope, eventually, he will have the one he loves."

"Now, Fanny, let us change the subject; and tell me all about yourself, and where you think of going."

"That, Bessie, I cannot do at present; but I will

write as soon as anything is settled, and you must not keep anything from me. I wish you were not going back quite so soon. I suppose after this we shall see nothing of each other until Easter. Last year at this time we had just left our dear old school; and I was thinking of the College, and you were thinking of being married, and were full of bright hopes. What a long year; and yet, in some respects, how short! And how different things have turned out to what we expected!"

"Yes, dear: they have," replied Bessie. "And sometimes I feel very downcast and sad. You remember, Fanny, I told you some officers come sometimes to preach in the little chapel and in the school room. One of those gentlemen repeated some verses which I liked so much that I tried to get them, and will say them to you now. I do not know the name of the writer, but they are American.

"Oh, eyes that are weary, and hearts that are sore,
Look off unto Jesus and sorrow no more!
The light of His countenance shineth so bright,
That on earth, as in heaven, there need be no night.

"Looking off unto Jesus, my eyes cannot see
The troubles and dangers that throng around me;
They cannot be blinded with sorrowful tears,
They cannot be shadowed with unbelief's fears.

"Looking off unto Jesus, oh, may I be found,
When the waters of Jordan encompass me round!
Let them bear me away in His presence to be:
'Tis but seeing Him nearer whom always I see.

“ ‘Then, then shall I know the full beauty and grace
Of Jesus, my Lord, when I stand face to face :
I shall know how His love went before me each day,
And wonder that ever my eyes turned away.’ ”

“ Dear Fanny, let us take for this new year that is just at hand this motto, ‘ Looking unto Jesus.’ ”

After a little more pleasant conversation the girls separated. And soon after, Bessie again bid her friends farewell, and returned to Bridgeport, to be ready to resume her work at the commencement of the new year.

CHAPTER XL.

ANOTHER NEW YEAR'S DAY.

BESSIE returned to Bridgeport the last day of the old year. She thought she would like to begin this new year there, so had returned earlier than she need have done ; for the school would not commence for a few days, as there were many arrangements to be made. A large room had been taken in another street some little distance from the old school, and there Bessie was going to begin her work with the girls and infants.

"Oh, Miss Lester dear: will you go to the watch-night service?" asked Millie Rooker, shortly after Bessie's arrival. "We should like you to: that is, of course, if you are not too tired."

"I should like to go very much, Millie dear, though I must say I have been used to, and prefer, the early morning service ; and think it nice to be in chapel and catch the first gleams of approaching

daylight, and to think you are actually beginning this first day of the new year in God's house. And, then, when your minister and friends wish you a 'Happy New Year' and 'Good morning,' you realize that the new year has indeed commenced."

They all went, and an impressive service it was, and the minister spoke some solemn words; and it always seems a solemn time when the bell-ringers welcome in the new year.

When Bessie reached home she felt exceedingly tired: her journey and the late service seemed almost too much for her. Nevertheless, she could not sleep; for her thoughts would involuntarily go back to last new year's day, when Bernard and herself had remained together to hear the bells.

"And now I do not even know where he is. I wonder if he, too, has been thinking of this time last year. Oh, how thoughtless I was then! and, oh, how weak I feel now! But why should I? The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and He will give me daily strength. Oh, my Father, help me to live the life of a Christian. Guide me in all Thy ways, and help me to keep that motto in sight, 'Looking unto Jesus,' for through Him we can do all things and bear all things; but directly we leave off looking, and try to do things in our own strength, we utterly fail,—just as Peter, when walking upon the waves. While

he looked at his Lord and Master the waters bore him up; but immediately he looked away, and at the dark waves around him, he began to sink. Oh, then, for stronger faith!"

And then Bessie repeated the beautiful text, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." And then she fell asleep, and did not wake till young voices were beside her bed again wishing her a Happy New Year.

CHAPTER XLI.

SPECIAL MEETINGS.

BESSIE'S girls' and infants' school flourished and increased amazingly ; and the friends who generously supported them felt it was the right thing to divide the schools, instead of boys, girls, and infants being all together as before.

The boys' school did not fare quite so well as the girls', for, after a short time, the master left, and then another had to be sought for. Mr. Rooker found that he must devote a great deal of his own time to work in the school. He had no objection to this, only there were so many other things requiring his attention.

Bessie was often at the old school, at the various meetings that were held ; and, occasionally, she would have a talk with some of her old scholars, who were always very pleased to see her. She was quietly happy in her work, and was sorry that

her friend Fanny was still too unwell to enter into any school engagement.

Miss Grantham had returned to her favourite place,—London. Bessie hoped to have seen her at Brinybeach, and wondered she had not heard from her, as it was longer than usual since she had been favoured with a letter. At length she received one.

“My very dear Bessie,

“I am afraid you must begin to think me rather remiss in not writing before. I have thought of you very much, dear. I am now pretty well settled at work again, and my school is gradually increasing. And I trust the Lord is prospering my work; only I long to see some of the dear children brought to a knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus. I have likewise had the privilege of again speaking at the College. I spoke from that text (John xi.), ‘The Master is come, and calleth for thee.’ Very many of the dear girls were deeply moved. I am very unworthy of the honour, but pray most earnestly that I may be made a blessing. Oh, for the Holy Spirit to fire our hearts, and make us earnest in our Saviour’s cause! How can we love and serve Him enough? All we have we owe to His free grace and mercy. How thankful I am that you, my beloved friend, are safely folded in Jesus’ arms! He will never let you go. Cling closer, and yet closer, to Him.

"I have heard quite cheerful accounts from Brinybeach. I am longing to go there again. I want to write to dear Mr. North. Did I tell you he paid me a visit? Write soon, dear. You know how anxious I am to hear of all that concerns you, and your work at Bridgeport."

Bessie soon wrote to Miss Grantham, and gave her a full account of the separate schools, and asked that lady's advice on various subjects.

Shortly after this, Mr. Rooker told Bessie he thought of trying to get a week of special services, and some tea meetings, for the poor folks.

"Do you think, Miss Lester, the gentleman you were telling me of the other day, as working so earnestly and acceptably in Brinybeach, would come here and render some assistance in these services?"

"Yes, Mr. Rooker: I feel almost sure he would, if you invited him. He was quite interested in your work here. I was telling him about it during my holidays."

Bessie was not wrong in her surmises, for Mr. North wrote at once, expressing his willingness and pleasure to say a few words in the Master's cause whenever Mr. Rooker required his services.

The week came at last, and it was beautifully fine for the time of the year. The tea meetings were quite a success. They had several: of course one

for the children, and another for the old people ; and so on, for one class or another.

Bessie was greatly amused at the rapid disappearance of huge piles of cakes and bread-and-butter ; and it seemed as if the old ladies were never going to tire of drinking tea.

“ Oh, such tea,” they said, “ as, you know, the likes of we do not often get,—with lump sugar and plenty of milk ! And then, I am sure, it was very kind of them there pretty ladies, and those kind gentlemen, to come down to these parts on purpose to wait on us.”

After tea, the guests were invited to remain and hear what the various gentlemen had to speak about, who felt that they were amply repaid for their labour of love. It cheered and did their hearts good to see some of those pale faces brighten for a time ; some among them showing, by their haggard looks, how hard a struggle it was to live and fight the battle of life each day, in many cases for a scanty subsistence.

Others joined the meeting later on. They were well attended, on the whole, and the people seemed deeply moved at the earnest, loving addresses delivered. And Mr. North concluded by offering up a simple prayer on their behalf: that they all might be numbered among God’s people when Christ came to make up His jewels.

Among the many gentlemen who, from time to time, rendered Mr. Rooker assistance, Mr. North recognised an old friend, whom he had met some years before at Aldershot,—a Mr. Lynn, who sometimes took the Sunday services. And these two were pleased to meet again, and talked over old times, about Mr. Rooker and his work, the schools, and then the teacher; and, without exactly meaning to, Mr. Lynn betrayed his interest in Miss Lester, which Mr. North did not fail to notice. A few leading questions from that gentleman, and Mr. Lynn confided to him the story of his love. Mr. North was fully in Bessie's confidence. He knew all about Bernard and herself, but hoped Bessie would have favoured Mr. Lynn's suit. But the young man went on to say, "He was afraid it was hopeless, as Bessie had given him a decided refusal. She admired and thought what a loving, kind-hearted, simple Christian he was; but, at the same time, was greatly astonished when he made her an offer of marriage, and at once kindly, but firmly, refused."

After this she had not seen quite so much of him lately, until Mr. North came, when he was again a constant visitor; so that gentleman thought he would speak a few words, and use his influence with Bessie on behalf of his friend before he left Bridgeport.

"Mr. North, before you leave us, would you like to visit some of the vessels now in the harbour?" asked Mr. Rooker.

"Indeed I should : very much !"

"Well, as it is so very fine, we might go to-day."

"Oh, papa dear, take us, too!" said several voices. "It is Saturday : we shall not be wanted in the school."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. North : "as it is Saturday, perhaps Miss Lester will accompany us likewise, and then it would be quite a holiday ! What do you say, Mr. Rooker ?"

"Oh, I am quite willing my daughters should go, if you have no objection. Run away, then, and ask Miss Lester if she would like to go with us."

Bessie was as much delighted as the children ; and so with pretty books, and an ample supply of tracts, they started. The sun shone brightly, the water sparkled, and the air was so fresh, it was quite exhilarating. Presently they came alongside one of H.M.'s Ironclads, and the question arose, How they were to get on board ? Their little boat seemed so far below the great big ship. And Bessie seemed almost inclined to remain in the boat when she saw the awkward-looking ladder they had to ascend. However, the young ladies managed, and there were willing hands at the top to assist. And they were amply repaid by the

pleasure of viewing the interior of so large a vessel.

The sailors were enjoying their tea, and they politely brought some for the youngsters, and offered some to Bessie, who tried to drink a little, as they had so kindly offered it; but it was more than she could manage without shocking grimaces, and making the gentlemen laugh.

"What is the matter with it?" asked Mr. North, with a smile.

"Oh, you taste it, and then you will know!"

The fact was, poor Jack's tea had been stewing too long: it was not weak, by any means.

The sailors gratefully accepted a book, and Mr. North spoke kindly to them as each received one.

They next visited a large training ship for boys. Here the ascent was not difficult, for there was a stage and steps, and here visitors frequently came. And Mr. Rooker had special interest in it, for some of the boys from his own school sometimes came here for training. Two had left for training since Bessie had been with them; and, of course, these two were particularly inquired for. They were not slow to make their appearance, and they informed Miss Lester, and the young ladies, that, if they would look up at the rigging, they would show them how well and nimbly they could ascend. And presently they beheld the

boys waving their hands to them aloft. Here the boys crowded round Mr. North and Mr. Rooker eagerly for the books. They were fairly besieged, and almost afraid they had not brought out sufficient. But they knew Mr. Rooker well ; and if they had not enough now, he would be sure to have some more next time.

Mr. North was highly gratified with the visit, and cheered and spoke comforting words to Mr. Rooker, and bade him God speed in his labour of love.

Afterwards, in speaking to Bessie, he said,—

“How very glad I am that you were led to come here: it seems the right place. And, my dear young friend, you have a great influence over those poor children. Pray that you may wield it wisely, and win many hearts to the Saviour’s cause ; and, in teaching others, may you be taught of Him, and your own soul be filled with joy and comfort in believing. And now, before I bid you farewell, may I ask you a question or two, and give you a few words of advice ?”

“Ask me anything you please, Mr. North, and I shall value your advice.”

“Well, then, as I have your permission, I wish to say a few words on behalf of my friend Mr. Lynn.”

Bessie blushed deeply, and her eyes fell. She

had no idea Mr. North was going to say anything about him. However, she quickly recovered and looked up.

Mr. North continued,—

“I have known Mr. Lynn several years, and I believe him to be a most genuine, loving, and humble follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. I soon saw that he was deeply interested in you, and then he confessed as much to me. Do you not like my friend?”

“Yes: very much,” answered Bessie.

“Then, do you not think, at some future period, you might give him a different answer?”

“I think not.”

“Are you still thinking, then, may I ask, of Mr. St. Vincent?”

“I often think of him; and, though I may not hear from him again, still I feel somehow bound to him, and have faith that he may yet be brought to see things as I do. At present, Mr. North, I have no wish to marry. I have been very happy in my work.”

CHAPTER XLII.

EASTER HOLIDAYS.

EASTER was now approaching, and where the holidays were to be spent was now the subject of discussion.

Bessie wrote to Miss Grantham to know if she would like to pay her a visit at Bridgeport, as she did not think of going home for these holidays.

That lady writes,—

“Do you think I am never going to answer your last letter? I have waited until I could tell you something definite about Easter. Well, my dear, if you are not going to Brinybeach, I think I shall be able to pay you a visit. I have ten days which I want to share between you and Lottie. Mr. and Mrs. Pearson wish me so much to visit Fieldclan; so I propose to go home with Lottie, and then come on to you some time in Easter-week, as may be hereafter arranged: that is, if this arrangement will be quite convenient to you. If not, mind you

say so. I will promise to come to you another time. I long to see your dear face. Things are going on pretty well with me. I only want to get nearer to Jesus. Dearest Bessie, the more we know of His heart of love, the more we want to know. True joy and happiness are only to be found by abiding in Him. We are too apt to let earthly things come in between our soul and God, and so hide His face from us. How we should pray that we may bask more and more in the sunshine of His love, if glimpses of the glory of Jesus are so unspeakably precious. What glorious times they seem to be having at Brinybeach: it makes me long to be there. I expect to be in the summer. Now, dear Bessie, if you have the least idea of going there, do you go, and I will take another opportunity of paying you a visit. God bless you, my very dear Bessie.

“With much love, believe me ever

“Yours affectionately.”

After reading this, Bessie quite decided to remain in Bridgeport, and receive her friend; and wrote to her mother and Fanny, telling them of her decision.

And Mr. St. Vincent: what of him? He was once more in London, but looking so careworn, ill, and sad that Edmund felt quite alarmed for his brother.

"Well, I do not think the change has had the effect you thought it would, Bernie," said Edmund.

"No: indeed it has not. Do you know, Edmund, if you will accompany me, I should like to go to Brinybeach for the Easter-week. Perhaps I might hear some news of Bessie. She may even be there, as she usually has some holidays at Easter."

"I wish, dear brother, that you would dismiss that young lady from your mind."

"Easier said than done, Edmund. Have I not been trying to do so all this time?"

And so it came to pass that Bernard and Edmund St. Vincent went to Brinybeach, and Bessie remained at Bridgeport. Consequently, they did not meet. But one day, as the brothers were enjoying the breezes on the beach, Bessie's young brother happened to see them, and, of course, boy-like, was pleased to recognise Bernard, and told him somewhat of his sister, and mentioned that she had written to say she would not be coming home for these holidays. And then the next letter to Bessie contained the news of Bernard's visit to Brinybeach.

Miss Grantham enjoyed her visit to Bridgeport exceedingly, and became deeply interested in every department of Mr. Rooker's work. During her visit she, too, became acquainted with Mr. Lynn, and seemed to like him so much that

she also thought she would like to see Bessie married to this individual. But Bessie still remained firm, though, as yet, she had heard nothing of Bernard.

CHAPTER XLIII.

BESSIE'S FIRST SERVICE.

SCHOOL work recommenced, and Bessie was once more actively engaged. With Mr. Rooker, I think Sunday was the hardest day; for besides the ragged school and service immediately connected with it, there was a Sunday school belonging to the little chapel in another part of the town. Various gentlemen used to volunteer to keep the pulpit supplied, so that generally Mr. Rooker was at liberty to go to his ragged school, and deliver addresses there to the people assembled.

Bessie usually taught in the ragged school on Sundays; but most frequently after school was over went to the chapel for the service.

One Sunday morning, as she was on her way thither, she was met by Millie Rooker, who looked hot and out of breath.

"Oh, dear Miss Lester," she exclaimed, "you must please return!"

"What do you mean, Millie? I am going to chapel, and if we loiter we shall be late."

"Papa wished me to ask you to go back to the school room, and talk to the people there, as the gentleman he expected to take the service in the chapel cannot attend, so he must preach himself this morning."

"Well, Millie, what is to be done? I am sure I do not know what I am going to say."

"I will go with you, dear Miss Lester, and help with the singing; and I am sure you can talk to them for a little while,—like you do to us sometimes: you know."

So to the school they went, and then Bessie said,—

"My dear Friends, Mr. Rooker cannot be with us this morning, and so you must bear with me for a little while; and may God grant us His Holy Spirit, that I may be enabled to speak a few words of comfort and consolation to some weary one here this morning. And now let us join in singing that beautiful hymn,—

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

They sang the hymn through, and then Bessie

said in a subdued and rather tremulous voice, "Let us pray.

"O God our Heavenly Father, how thankful we are that Thou didst tell us we might call Thee by that endearing name; for if we thought of Thee as the great and mighty God, the just and pure, the ruler of the universe, so wise and good, we should be afraid to venture to Thy throne to address Thee. But, thanks be to Thee, Thou didst send Thine own dear Son into this world; and, when upon earth, He taught that beautiful prayer, beginning, 'Our Father.' So now we can come with confidence to the throne of grace,—not with or through any merit of our own, but as we have been singing,—

'Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.'

We come to Thee through Thine own dear Son. His blood can wash away all our sins; and, clothed in His righteousness, we can approach the throne of the heavenly grace, and make known our wants unto Thee. Thou knowest them, O Lord, before we ask, for Thou knowest all things! Still Thou art pleased when Thy children come to Thee. And Thou hast said, Thou art more willing to give than we are to receive. And if, dear Lord, our petitions are not always answered in the way we expect, and sometimes the things asked for are

not granted, give us faith to believe in Thy wisdom and love, for Thou knowest when and what to give, and when to withhold.

“O Lord, we feel very weak and sinful this morning! Do Thou be with us. Send Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts. Shine upon Thy blessed page. May the Word read comfort some poor failing, weary, aching heart here before Thee. In our own strength we can do nothing. Help us, then, to come unto Thee, and ask and obtain pardon for all our sins, through the blood of Jesus, the all-atoning Lamb, who died for us, but also rose again, and now sitteth at the right hand of God to make intercession for us. And we have this promise, ‘that any that come unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.’ Oh, may we be enabled to cast our all on Jesus now, and say,—

“ ‘Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!’ ”

“God grant that some may turn to Him this morning, and receive pardon and peace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

The silence had been most profound, and Bessie had almost forgotten the public situation she was in.

She then, in clear and impressive tones, read

that beautiful chapter in Luke about the lost sheep and the prodigal son. Another hymn was sung, and again Bessie opened her little Bible, and gave out the words, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Dear friends, the beautiful words I have just read to you are some of those precious and gracious expressions that fell from the lips of our Lord and Master while upon earth. Just let us look at them for a short time, and may God's Holy Spirit give us faith to accept the invitation and receive the promise.

"First of all, you see, there is the invitation, 'Come unto Me.' Secondly, the sort of people invited to come, 'All ye that labour and are heavy laden.' And, lastly, the promise, 'I will give you rest.'

"'Come unto Me.' Oh, what an invitation! These are Jesus words. Why did he say 'Come unto Me'? Because, dear friends, He knew that none but Himself could do sinners good. He came to die, to be the Lamb slain, to fulfil all the types and shadows of the ceremonial law. Jesus said He came not to destroy but to fulfil the law. God is perfectly just, as well as good and merciful; therefore, a ransom had to be found for the people. So Jesus came and offered Himself a willing

sacrifice. He died, and the third day He rose again, and afterwards ascended to His Father and our Father. But, by-and-by, we are told, He will come again to judge the world. Oh, dear friends, if you have accepted Him as your Saviour you will not feel any alarm at the second coming of our Lord, for those who put their faith and confidence in Him shall be safe. He says: 'They shall be mine in that day when I come to make up my jewels.'

" 'All ye that labour and are heavy laden,' Jesus says, 'Come unto Me.' I know some of you are very tired and weary. Life's burden is indeed a heavy one of itself, without the load of sin. But, then, dear friends, you are just the sort that Christ is inviting to come unto Him. Are you sorrowful? Are you distressed? Are you sick? Is your conscience troubling you on account of sin? Then, to whom can you go but to Jesus? 'There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.' Some try to obtain happiness in one way, some in another; but there is no real, lasting happiness out of Christ. Some may think, If they only had plenty of money they should be happy; but riches take to themselves wings and fly away, and they can never, never purchase the peace that passeth all understanding: it is the gift of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“And you may have that peace and comfort now, you have nothing to do to merit it, if you will only come to Jesus. If you feel you are labouring and heavy laden, that sin is painful to you, then Jesus speaks to you, and says, ‘Come unto Me.’ Will you not lift your hearts in prayer to Him, and say, in the words of that little hymn,—

“ ‘Oh, Saviour, I have nought to plead,
In earth beneath or heaven above,
But just my own exceeding need,
And Thy exceeding love.’

TRAVERS MADGE.

“May God help those who have not done so already to accept this invitation, and receive the promised rest.

“‘I will give you rest.’ Oh, what a word that is! How some are panting for rest! You will still have some crosses to bear, some trials or difficulties to contend with; but if you come to Jesus, He will give you strength to bear them. And then, having run the race set before you, you shall obtain everlasting rest, and a crown of righteousness, that fadeth not away. Oh, then, listen to those loving words, ‘Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ May God bless us all, for Jesus’ sake.”

Another hymn was sung, and a short prayer followed, and then the meeting was at an end.

Bessie went to the door to shake hands with some of her old friends, and then walked quietly home. She was thinking how unexpectedly this had come about, and wished she had known before, so that she might have had some little time to prepare and think over what she should say. "But never mind," thought Bessie, "I know God can bless a few simple words."

Bessie afterwards learnt some hymns that had reference to the text she then spoke upon. She had not seen them at this time; and, indeed, I do not know if they were written. As some of my readers may not have met with them, I take the liberty of copying them here, from a small book, compiled by Rev. Paxton Hood, entitled, "The Children's Choir and Little Service of Sacred Song."

"Heart-broken and weary, where'er thou may'st be,
There are no words like these words for comforting thee :
When sorrows come round thee like waves of the sea,
The Saviour says cheerfully, 'Come unto Me.'

"There are no words like these words, Come hither and rest,
Afflicted, forsaken, the thorn in thy breast ;
All lonely and helpless, He thought upon thee,
And He said in His tenderness, 'Come unto Me.'

"O Saviour, my spirit would fain be at rest !
There are passions which rage like a storm in my breast :
O show me the road along which I must flee,
And strengthen me, Saviour, to come unto Thee !

“There are no words like these words : how blessed they be !
How calming when Jesus says, ‘Come unto Me !’
O hear them, my heart, they were spoken to thee,
And still they are calling thee, ‘Come unto Me !’

“I will walk through the world with these words on my heart,
Through sorrow or sin they shall never depart ;
And, when dying, I hope He will whisper to me,
‘I have loved thee, and saved thee, Come, sinner, to Me.’”

“THERE REMAINETH A REST.

“Rest remaineth : O how sweet !
Flow’ry fields for wand’ring feet,
Peaceful calm for sleepless eyes,
Life for death, and songs for sighs.

“Rest remaineth : hush that sigh !
Mournful pilgrim, rest is nigh ;
Yet a season, bright and blessed,
Thou shalt enter on thy rest.

“Rest remaineth : rest from sin ;
Guilt can never enter in ;
Every warring thought shall cease :
Rest in purity and peace.

“Rest remaineth : rest from tears,
Rest from parting, rest from fears ;
Every trembling thought shall be
Lost, my Saviour, lost in Thee.

“Rest remaineth : O how blest !
We believe, and we have rest ;
Faith, reposing faith, has been
’Mongst the things that are not seen.

“Thus, my Saviour, let me be
Even here at rest in Thee ;
And at last, by Thee possessed,
On Thy bosom sink to rest.”

CHAPTER XLIV.

WHITSUNTIDE.

BESSIE was looking forward to Whitsuntide with pleasure, as she was to have then a week's holiday. She had not seen her friends since Christmas, and therefore thought she would go to Brinybeach. The Miss Rookers tried to persuade her to remain in Bridgeport, as she had done at Easter; but this Bessie told them she could not do, as she wished to see her parents, and sisters, and brother, and mentioned that she contemplated bringing her sister Rosalie to stay with her for a time, if her mother could spare her.

Bessie made her arrangements accordingly, and wrote to her friends what day they might expect her home.

It was about the middle of May. The weather was indeed lovely; and Bessie was thinking how pleasant it would be, and how she should enjoy a

ramble once more on her dearly-loved shore. Then rather sad thoughts came into her head, for she could not help thinking of Bernard. She would be sure to miss him there, for he was so connected with all her recent associations in Brinybeach. They used to have such charming walks by the dear old sea. "Ah," thought Bessie, "Bernard was there at Easter! I wonder if he will visit Brinybeach again this Whitsuntide."

The day fixed for starting was splendidly fine. The sun shone brightly on the sparkling water, as Bessie, accompanied by her young friends, crossed the bridge, for they intended to see Bessie off. She was in the best of spirits, and felt quite joyous and light-hearted, and merrily bade her young friends Good-bye. And Bessie thought there was no place she loved as well as Brinybeach.

The engine puffed out of the station at last. "And now," thought Bessie, "I am fairly on my way. Before another two hours I shall, in all probability, be at home."

Presently her thoughts were interrupted rather unceremoniously: the train suddenly stopped; and, as there was no station near, people began to inquire what was the matter. They had not got far on their journey. Only about seven miles had been left behind since they started.

"What is the matter, guard?" became the

general inquiry, after a few minutes elapsed, and there did not seem any sign of progress.

"Only the engine broke down. And we shall just have to stop here until another comes."

"We had better get out, then : had we not ?"

"Oh, no : that does not matter ! My mate has started off to the next station, which is not such a great way off ; and they will telegraph to all the stations on the line of our mishap, though I reckon this will make us a goodish bit late, you know, at Brinybeach."

After what seemed a considerable time, another engine arrived, and they were once more fairly on their journey, but did not reach their destination until more than an hour later than the train was due.

Bessie's mother was waiting to meet her at the station, and getting exceedingly nervous and uneasy at the delay, though, before the train appeared, she had heard the cause. Bessie saw her mother, and sprang out to meet her, laughingly assuring her she was all right. "She had only suffered," she said, "from a fit of impatience."

Arrived at home once more, there seemed so many questions to be asked and answered, that the time passed quickly away. The weather continued very fine and warm, and Brinybeach seemed to have a fair share of visitors. Every day Bessie spent

some time on her favourite part of the beach,—sometimes with only a book; at other times her mother and sister would accompany her.

Once, too, during this visit she met her old friend, Mr. Carlton, and they had a quiet walk and chat together. Of course he inquired most particularly for Mr. St. Vincent; but it was not much news he could glean from Bessie. She learnt from Mr. Carlton that he was engaged to be married, of which Bessie was very glad. Other young friends she had known she met likewise; but Fanny was not able to be there, and, of course, Bessie missed her very much.

“And Bernard?” you will perhaps ask.

She was not likely to see him now, for the week was fast drawing to a close, and then she would have to return to Bridgeport.

Her mother said,—

“I wish you had been here at Easter. Harry said Mr. St. Vincent was looking ill. And, indeed, I believe he has been very ill. I think, Bessie, you behaved rather badly to him.”

“Well, mother dear, I am very sorry he has been ill. I should like to know how he is. Let me see,” she said, thoughtfully, “this will be my last day for taking any walk, as to-morrow I must return. Do you know, mother, I will call on Mr. Ambrose. I am going near there presently, and

will inquire if he has heard anything from Bernard : whether he is in London, and if he knows that he is better."

"Yes: do, my dear. I should like to know. And it would only be kind to inquire after him."

Accordingly, Bessie called. Mr. Ambrose appeared greatly surprised to see her; but was more astonished when she inquired of him what he knew about Mr. St. Vincent. He was then desirous that she should not know of his feelings.

Bessie told him that her mother having heard Mr. St. Vincent had been ill, she thought, perhaps, he would be able to inform them how he was.

"I am happy to tell you that the last I heard of my friend he was first-rate."

"I thank you," said Bessie. And she was about to retire, when Mr. Ambrose continued,—

"I believe Mr. St. Vincent is in London; but I do not know his exact address. But I can give you Mr. Edmund's."

"Thank you," said Bessie. "I merely wished to inquire how Mr. St. Vincent was; and, as you tell me he is 'first-rate,' that is quite sufficient." And she wished him "Good afternoon."

Bessie returned to Bridgeport the following day, taking with her Rosalie, who was about fifteen years of age. Bessie and her sister were just about

to begin housekeeping for themselves, and had engaged some apartments not far from the school. And Rosalie was very proud of her housekeeping capabilities; but gave her assistance in the school whenever she had time to spare.

CHAPTER XLV.

AN UNEXPECTED LETTER.

AFTER Bessie had left Mr. Ambrose, that gentleman fairly laughed at his own sagacity in deceiving Miss Lester. "First-rate, indeed," he soliloquized. "I know he is anything but that ; but I was not going to tell her. I have no patience with you, my young lady, and I only wish my dear friend Bernard cared nothing about you. I wonder what she will think of hearing he was first-rate. She took it coolly enough, though. Ah, Miss Lester, if you thought I was going to tell you Bernard was ill and unhappy, you were mistaken, that's all. However," thought Mr. Ambrose, "I am not sure that my friend will thank me, so I think I had better write and tell Edmund that Bernard's precious lady-love called and made inquiries after his health." Accordingly, he wrote at once to Edmund to that effect.

Bernard happened to be on a visit to his brother when the identical letter arrived. They were walking in the garden. Bernard looked ill, and there was a settled look of melancholy in his face. He betrayed no interest when the letter was handed to his brother, although Edmund said it was from Mr. Ambrose.

An exclamation, however, from Edmund caused Bernard to look up, and the letter was then handed over for him to read.

Bernard was strangely agitated. At length he remarked, "How could Ambrose tell Miss Lester I was 'first-rate'? But, there, he was a good fellow after all to write and let me know so quickly. So Bessie is in Brinybeach, then. I think I will write a few lines to her this very evening." Which he did, thinking Bessie would get the letter the following morning; but, of course, she had already left Brinybeach for Bridgeport.

Bessie's mother made a shrewd guess who the letter was from, and lost no time in enclosing it in one of her own to her daughter.

"Oh, a letter from mother!" says Rosalie at breakfast, two mornings after their return.

Bessie opened it, and then perceived the one enclosed from Bernard.

"Oh, what is it, dear Bessie?" said her sister. "Is anything the matter at home?"

"Oh, no, dear: they are all quite well," answered Bessie, glancing at her mother's letter. "But I have another letter as well here, it is from Mr. St. Vincent."

"Oh, I am glad, Bessie dear: I do like Mr. St. Vincent. I hope he will come and see us," said Rosalie, merrily.

Bessie was silent, for she was greatly surprised, and rather perplexed. The letter was as follows,—

"My dear Miss Lester,

"Having this moment heard from my brother that Mr. Ambrose had written saying you had inquired for me, I hasten at once to forward you my address. Trusting you are quite well, and with undiminished love,

"I remain

"Ever yours,

"BERNARD."

Bessie was so preoccupied with her own reflections, that she had forgotten her breakfast, till Rosalie asked if she should pour her out some fresh coffee, for she had let what she had before her get cold.

Bessie felt sadly puzzled now. She did not know what or how to write to Bernard; but she thought she would leave it, and consider more about it in the evening.

In the meantime, Bernard was expecting to hear from her. He did not know of the delay occasioned

by her having left Brinybeach, but put it all down to her previous disinclination to answer his letters; and, consequently, felt rather angry,—wondering why she should inquire, and then not deign to take any notice when he wrote to her.

At last he could stand it no longer, and dashed off another letter, with the inquiry, why Miss Lester had wished to know anything about him, if she had no communication to make. This letter was addressed as before, to Brinybeach; and, consequently, a similar delay took place.

In the evening, when Bessie returned from her school, she took up the letter she had received in the morning, and read it again; but she could not make up her mind to write to Bernard. On the following morning, however, when she received the second letter, she decided she must write and explain why she had inquired about him when in Brinybeach.

CHAPTER XLVI.

RENEWED CORRESPONDENCE.

BERNARD was very much affected when he received Bessie's letter, and he lost no time in writing to her again.

"Dearest Bessie,

"I thank you very much indeed for having written to me once more. The receiving of another letter from you is the greatest pleasure I have had as yet during the year eighteen hundred and sixty-four.

"Mr. Ambrose wrote to my brother that you had inquired about me; and, by a singular coincidence, I happened to be there when the letter arrived. I lost no time in letting you know my address, for two reasons: one, to answer your inquiry; and another, I have been for some time anxious to acquaint you with my whereabouts since my return from the Continent, but preferred not to forward it through the medium of Clarendon

Street. My first impulse, on hearing you were in Brinybeach, and had inquired after me, was to hasten thither, seek you out, and obtain an interview ; but, on reflection, was afraid to trust myself again, knowing what effect it would have upon me.

“For the last few months I have been trying hard to forget you, and keep my mind occupied as much as possible with other matters. And I have frequently changed my residence ; and, in short, have done all that I can to make me think less about you. I was almost sorry you woke up my feelings again, when you took no notice of my communication ; but, when once aroused, I have been more excited than ever, and scarcely know what I have been about since Mr. Ambrose’s letter arrived. But I am so far glad that I resisted the temptation of coming to see you until I had cooled down a little. I feel extremely grateful to you for still feeling any interest in me. Mr. Ambrose knows little about me when he says I am “first-rate.” I regret to say I am far from well, and have not been so for some time past. Hoping soon to have the opportunity of writing to you again,

“I remain ever yours,

“BERNARD.”

“Poor Bernard,” thought Bessie, as she finished the letter. “I am sure I do not deserve such

constant love as he has shown towards me, for, in some things, I know I have been very unkind; though, on the main point, I feel the same now as I did some months ago, when our engagement was broken off. But, there, I do not believe Bernard would have renewed this correspondence if his views were not in sympathy with mine now. It seems very strange. How suddenly this has come about! I little thought when I inquired of Mr. Ambrose that Bernard would take the trouble to write to me so quickly."

Bessie did not fail to remember Bernard in her prayers, and to ask for guidance and wisdom that she might write what she ought. Accordingly, she wrote a long letter to Bernard, asking forgiveness for any unkindness she might have shown him; but firmly stating that, on the all-important point of religion, she felt the same now as some months since, though at the same time admitting that she still cared for him. Bessie finished up by adding,—

"You will think this is a very foolish letter for me to write."

The answer was somewhat delayed, as Bernard writes,—

"I was absent from home when your letter arrived, and so did not receive it until late last evening. I could not answer it then, being too fatigued and too much affected by the contents.

To-day I am not prepared to answer it as I should wish, only I cannot feel comfortable to delay writing to you longer. I did not by any means think that was a foolish letter for you to write; and I unconditionally and freely forgive you all the grief, anxiety, and uneasiness which you may at any time have caused me.

“As for unkindness, I do not accuse you of any. Certainly not of any intentional, and therefore I have nothing to forgive on that score. No doubt you, having always been brought up and, I may say, reared in the path of religious duties, may still look at them differently to what I do. I like to profess only less than I feel, and try to act up to all I profess. I do not think it essential or proper to make use of the Holy Name on ordinary occasions, or in general letter-writing. It would be very easy indeed, believe me, to both write and to act so as to make you think I was of the same opinion as yourself in every respect, but I will not condescend to do it.

“On the grand point or principal belief, I have every reason to suppose that I now regard it as you do; but, on the other hand, I never mean or wish to alter your opinion on religious matters of less importance. I really do not think there are two persons living with exactly the same opinions, or who take precisely the same view.

"It may be wise to seek a husband having as nearly as possible the same opinions as yourself, but you may be deceived in many ways. He may not be candid, and may conceal his real thoughts, in order to please you. He may imagine he loves you, without having been put to the test of knowing how deeply ; and you may find, when too late, that he is not what you expected.

"I hope, dear Bessie, you will excuse me for thus speaking my mind, with, at the same time, all due respect and reverence for your feelings. I might not have written in this way, only that you confess you still care for me.

"About giving up the world. I thought I gave that up most when I gave up what I loved most in it,—'yourself.' I have never ceased nor can cease to love you, although I consented to give you up.

"Love is beyond human control. We must try and love what we ought, as much as lies in our power ; and anything we should not love, that is, some worldly things, we must try and avoid setting our affections on too deeply. More, I think, we cannot do. With earnest prayers for your health and happiness,

"Ever yours,

"BERNARD."

Letters now followed one another in quick succession, till both Bessie and Bernard came to the conclusion that a personal interview would be

desirable, as they would better be able to understand each other.

Bessie inquired how long he would be able to remain in Bridgeport.

Bernard answered,—

“I cannot tell you exactly now: that depends mainly on my feelings. I may only stay an hour or two, or I may remain two or three days. I will try all I can to come on Friday, so that if I stay, or it is agreeable to stay, I shall have as much time as possible.

“From feeling exceedingly wretched and miserable lately, I have undergone quite a change, and feel unusually lively and animated. I cannot account for it. I have perused the small tract you enclosed in your last letter very attentively. It is rather an uncommon one: is it not? and is, no doubt, intended to be circulated among those who imagine they have no need of a Saviour. I am longing for Friday, although I may be disappointed and not be able to come.

“You have so much of my love already that I do not intend to send you any more through the post office until I know you have a good place where to put it; therefore I must come and bring what I can with me, and pack it as closely as I can to leave room for more.

“Yours,

“BERNARD.”

CHAPTER XLVII.

RELENTING.

BESSIE and Rosalie liked their new apartments very well : they seemed quite cosy and nice. And they could invite any friends to see them, or drink tea with them to their heart's content. Rosalie had no desire to return home : it was such an entire change to her ; and they made such fun over their small housekeeping affairs, that it was quite amusing. This young lady soon introduced herself, and became quite at home with the landlady and her husband before Bessie did ; but after that, Bessie soon began to have a little conversation with them. These good people had known Mr. Rooker some time, and were acquainted with and much interested in his work among the poor children of the town.

Bessie knew they were religious people, but did not know to what denomination they belonged.

But one evening, when talking with them, Mr. Everton mentioned something about the Brethren.

"Oh," said Bessie, innocently, "do you belong to the Plymouth Brethren?"

"To the Brethren, Miss Lester," replied the gentleman, correcting her. "Some people, I know, call us 'Plymouth Brethren,' but we only call ourselves 'Brethren.' We belong to no sect."

But Bessie could not see eye to eye with Mr. Everton on this point. She thought that they formed another sect of themselves, just as much as those called by other names. However, as Bessie said, "She had no wish, neither was she capable of holding any argument on religious subjects." All she thought was, that those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, and looked to Him as the all-atoning sacrifice for their sins, were all brethren, of whatever sect or denomination.

However, although differences of opinion existed between them on some points, they got on very comfortably together.

"We are going to take a drive to — on Wednesday, as it is a general holiday. Would you and Miss Rosalie like to accompany us?" said Mr. Everton.

"Thank you," replied Bessie. "I have already engaged for myself and Rosalie to go with a friend to the Isle of Wight."

Which they afterwards did, and enjoyed the short trip amazingly ; but there was not much time for going over the island then, as there were no railroads opened for traffic. There was one being constructed, and nearly completed, between Ryde and Ventnor, and it was expected it would have been opened on this day ; but a delay had occurred. Bessie and her friends walked into the new station, and took a survey ; and the workmen seemed amused at their disappointment that the traffic had not commenced. On the whole they spent a very pleasant day.

Bessie and her sister were now looking forward to Mr. St. Vincent's promised visit. Rosalie was in high glee, and continually on the look-out to see if their friend was in sight ; but Bessie felt nervous as the time drew near. But the evening passed, and no Bernard came, so Bessie began to think he would not come till the following week, so she and Rosalie arranged to take a long walk with a friend on the morrow. Just as they were preparing to set out, Rosalie startled her sister by suddenly exclaiming,—

“ Oh, Bessie, here is Mr. St. Vincent ! ”

And, without another word, she ran downstairs to welcome him, having seen him approaching as she was looking out from the low window.

I am afraid he received a more cordial greeting

from Rosalie than he did from Bessie ; for, somehow, now he was actually before her, Bessie felt strange and nervous, so it was but a cool reception that she accorded him. And Rosalie felt quite vexed with her sister for giving Mr. St. Vincent such a cool greeting. She did all in her power to compensate, and make him feel comfortable.

After a short interval, Bessie remarked,—

“We were not sure if you would be able to come to-day, and we have made an arrangement to go to a certain place. But will you like to accompany us?”

Bernard consented to do so, though, at the same time, he felt he would have much preferred remaining indoors, and having a quiet talk with Bessie. There seemed a restraint between them, and Bernard was feeling very sad indeed at Bessie's coolness. She did appear cool outwardly. But when she looked at him, and saw the pained expression of his countenance, she felt, as it were, more drawn towards him, and as if she would like to comfort him.

Ah, Bessie was evidently relenting!

But it was not until nearly the time for Bernard's departure that anything like free conversation between them took place.

Bernard told Bessie of what he had been doing, and the various places he had visited since he last saw her. And then added, “That he felt now he could truly say that he believed in and accepted

Jesus as the promised Messiah, and had embraced the Christian faith." He said "that he had enjoyed much, and had been considerably edified and enlightened by reading a little book by Mme. Guyon."

Bessie was indeed pleased and thankful to hear him say thus much of what he had experienced. And then she asked him to come and see her school, and he accompanied her, and felt interested in the work there; but privately thought it was almost too much for her, and that she was overtaking her strength. He did not think she looked nearly as well as when he had last seen her at Brinybeach.

When asked particularly concerning her health, she admitted she was not very well at times. But, of course, just now she was feeling rather unsettled.

Bernard made two or three propositions for her after-consideration, and then bade her and Rosalie adieu.

She soon received a letter from him after his return to London, stating he was very busy now, and had been much wanted while away. He then goes on to say,—

"I hope, dearest Bessie, you do not feel so unsettled as you did. Really you ought not, if you reflect, through God's blessing, what good you are the means of doing. It is no trifle to have influence sufficient to draw and divert men's thoughts from worldly pursuits, and fix them on,

what is by far of greater importance, 'everlasting life.' Believe me, I cannot now help feeling so indebted to you, that I love you for that alone, more, if possible, than I have ever loved.

"You have completely altered and subdued me. Thank God, I was not very obdurate; but still at times, I fear, was wilfully blind; and, unless I could have been softened and humbled first, I have not the least doubt I never should have felt as I do now.

"You will, perhaps, never credit that since Saturday evening (when I was a little uncomfortable) I can seldom recollect feeling happier than I have continued to feel since then. Thanks be to God, even leaving you this time did not have the usual depressing influence. I seemed to have found something, independently of your company, to have given me peace of mind; and although I have not as yet confidence enough in myself, yet still I hope and pray soon to have. I may though truly and conscientiously say, that I now feel more turned towards the Lord Jesus, and the need of Him, than ever I have felt before.

"I will endeavour to write to you again shortly, dear, on general matters.

"With ever best and fondest love,

"From your devoted

"BERNARD."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

RECONCILIATION.

“**S**O you intend to leave us after all,” said Mr. Rooker to Miss Lester, shortly after the events recorded in our last chapter. “We shall be very sorry to part with you. Still, you have been with us longer than we expected when you first came, so I suppose we ought not to grumble at our loss now.

“I am sure we all wish you and dear Mr. St. Vincent much joy and happiness.

“Of course I know you would like to be at liberty as soon as possible, so I thought if we broke up for the summer vacation by the 1st of July, you might be free then; and I must manage to get someone to undertake the charge of the school after they re-assemble. The holidays coming so opportunely sets you free earlier than you could otherwise have been.”

“Thank you,” said Bessie. “Then you think I can make arrangements for leaving here by the 1st of July.”

“Precisely so, Miss Lester, if you wish.”

We must just go back a little in our story in order to inform our readers how it was that Bessie had decided to leave Bridgeport.

You will, perhaps, remember that in the last interview she had with Bernard, he proposed two or three things for her consideration ; and now as they had been fully discussed and written about, there was no barrier between them. They were now one in heart and mind. A complete reconciliation, therefore, had taken place ; and, as a matter of course, they would now be married as soon as possible. And as the holidays were to commence so shortly, Bessie would be at liberty much sooner than either of them anticipated.

So after waiting so long, Bernard, at the last, was rather taken by surprise when he received a letter from Bessie, stating that she would leave Bridgeport on the 1st July ; and among other words which it contained was this phrase,—

“So if you really want me, you must meet me in Brinybeach.”

In Bernard's answer to this, he says,—

“If I really want you. Aye, my dearest, only ‘if.’ I cannot now find in my heart to reprove you the

slightest degree, or I would find fault with that monosyllable 'if,' and the word 'really' as well. Oh, dear, had you seen me when I read your letter you would not have doubted it!"

Rosalie did not at all approve of the sudden turn affairs had taken. She was quite willing and glad to have Bernard for her brother-in-law, but she did not want him to take Bessie away from Bridgeport just yet; for she was enjoying herself so much, and had become greatly attached to some of the friends there, that she did not like the idea of leaving so suddenly.

There was somebody else, too, who would willingly have detained Miss Lester in Bridgeport, and used every argument he could to induce her to remain, but all to no purpose. This gentleman was a relation of Mr. Everton's; and, when he knew the cause of Bessie's leaving, pressed his suit so perseveringly, that Bessie was anxious not to prolong her stay even on that account.

Mrs. Lester, Miss Grantham, and Fanny were all taken by surprise at the suddenness of the announcement; but they likewise rejoiced that their dear Bessie was happy, and that Bernard and she could now join hand and heart, and look to the Saviour to bless them in all the joys or sorrows that awaited them.

The poor children were very sorrowful when told

that their teacher was about to leave them, and they made up their minds that she should have some token of their love to take away with her. Of course they could not afford much, but they asked Mr. Rooker if they might bring their pence to him, in order to buy some little present for Miss Lester.

That gentleman was very pleased at this token of their gratitude, and willingly undertook the responsibility. So with the children's pence he purchased a nicely-bound reference Bible, which was, with due form and ceremony, presented to Bessie, and on the first leaf was inscribed the particulars of the presentation.

That Bible still remains one of Bessie's greatest treasures (although Bernard claims joint ownership now), and she has never forgotten the love which prompted the gift.

A few of the boys from the school rowed Bessie and Rosalie across the harbour, and nearly all the children assembled on the beach to wave their hats or handkerchiefs, as a last farewell, till they were out of sight.

They then took kind leave of the boys who had rowed them over; and, accompanied by some friends, drove to the station, and took their tickets for Brinybeach.

Rosalie was in tears, and Bessie was very

thoughtful. Only little more than a month since she was taking that journey home, and wondering where Bernard was ; and then came to her mind that memorable visit to Mr. Ambrose.

They arrived safely in Brinybeach, and not many hours afterwards were joined by Bernard from London.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CONCLUSION.

BERNARD spent two or three happy days with Bessie in Brinybeach, and then he was compelled to return to London, as business happened just then to be very pressing ; and, of course, it was of more importance to him now that it should not be neglected, as he was about to increase his expenses.

Bernard had arranged with Bessie that, for the present, their home must be in London. He wrote her a few hurried lines on his arrival, with the promise of a longer letter, which soon followed.

“My own very dearest,

“I cannot retire to rest before writing you a few lines, although I hope to see you again so shortly. You will be surprised, dearest, to hear what a baby I have been. I cried all the way home in the train. All I could do, I could not stop myself, although I was being looked at by all my fellow-passengers ; and two ladies, who sat

opposite to me, seemed quite concerned. I was thinking of you. And what you were reading the other day caused this ebullition of feeling ; but I was ashamed of giving way so much, and must really try and cure myself of this weakness.

“I wish I could have heard as composedly as you read those lines; and then your telling me afterwards you pictured it was yourself. For all that I must ask you to read the piece again when I next see you.”

Bessie had been reading to Bernard some extracts of rather a sorrowful nature.

In the latter part of his letter, Bernard goes on to narrate some few of the mishaps that had befallen him.

“I made the discovery when I came home that I had lost my street door key, and the next minute found out that I had brought away my landlady’s latch key from Brinybeach. The good lady here told me I was in love.

“I had a long conversation with my brother, and he is willing to come to witness our marriage. I told him you wished it as well as myself. He said a year ago he would have had nothing to do with it, and would have endeavoured all he could to dissuade me from it ; but now he thought differently. He went to see my mother this evening, but I cannot go until to-morrow.

“He persuades me most strongly not to say

anything to her about you until after we are married, because he thinks it cannot possibly do any good, and will only make it worse for me, as he fears it will vex her so much that it may make her ill. But he thinks when it is all over, and my mother knows it cannot be altered, she may, perhaps, be reconciled. How I pray that she may, and that she will receive and welcome my dear wife as she deserves! Please God, all will be for the best. But still, my darling, I know it would be more satisfactory to you if she knew it before; and I would tell her, if you had rather I should do so. Although I have been very much engaged to-day, I managed to find time to purchase a wedding ring. But in case it does not fit well, I will get another. But, whichever one you have, I most earnestly hope and pray that you will never repent wearing it, and that God will bless and preserve you, and protect you from all temptations and sin; and grant you power and influence sufficient to be able, by your example and love, to direct your husband's thoughts and ideas to the love and entire dependence on that blessed Saviour, so that we both may place our sole reliance on Him.

“This is the heartfelt wish,

“My own very dearest,

“Of your ever loving and devoted

“BERNARD.”

Bernard was very much engaged now, and had so many things to attend to, that he was afraid he would not have much time to spend with Bessie.

On applying for a marriage license, he was somewhat dismayed on being informed that one could not be granted unless either the lady or himself had resided in one place for at least twenty-one days. And, of course, neither of them had done so, for Bessie had not many days left Bridgeport, and Bernard had also been away from London; so now it would be necessary for one of them to remain in one place three weeks. It could not be Bernard, as he must come to and fro. So, as one must wait, Bessie thought she could not do better than spend the three weeks in the country with Fanny, where she was to spend her holidays, and where the two girls had frequently remained for a few quiet days before, and also they knew the good old Rector of the pretty church of Fernydale.

Fernydale was a pretty rural little village, nestling at the foot of some hills, a few miles from Brinybeach. It was not very easy of access, though, for the nearest railway station, at Fowlfield, was some four miles distant; and even if a private conveyance was required, it must be ordered from that place, or Brinybeach, the day before. It did, however, boast of a carrier twice a week to

Brinybeach. And very miscellaneous were the orders he sometimes had to execute for the good folks of Fernydale, as the place did not enumerate among its tradespeople either a butcher or a pastry-cook.

Of course the butcher's man from Fowlfield called there twice a week, and there was good home-made bread to be had, fine fresh butter, new-laid eggs, and poultry, if required. Certainly it was not a fashionable place, and very seldom any visitors staid longer than a few hours. Indeed, the village offered very little accommodation.

The house where Bernard slept on his visit was a picture of antiquity, with a sloping thatched roof; but it had this advantage, of being opposite to the cottage where Bessie and Fanny were, and where they had resided on two or three former occasions. The girls were charmed with their quiet place; and, when they opened the small diamond-paned casement in the morning, thought the air was delicious, as the perfume of the roses greeted them.

Bernard thought it very picturesque, and enjoyed it very much; and the water was so cool, as it came rushing and sparkling from a spring by the hillside. He would have been glad to have remained longer, but was compelled to return to London. They, however, made arrangements that the wedding should take place in Fernydale, or a further delay might unavoidably occur.

The morning of the wedding Bernard rose very early indeed, and walked into Brinybeach, as he wished to be at the station to meet his brother. On the road he had the pleasure of meeting Bessie's friends, who were on their way to witness the ceremony, and they were not a little astonished at meeting him. He explained his errand, and said he hoped to be with them again in a few hours.

He met Edmund, and a special carriage was hired for the day, as they would want to return to Brinybeach station during the afternoon.

Bernard had another very special commission to fulfil. But what was his discomfiture and dismay, on his return to Fernydale, to find he had forgotten all about it!

A box left at the cloak room for him, from a pastry-cook's in Brinybeach, containing wedding cake, he had omitted to call for. Among his other responsibilities this had entirely escaped his memory.

Oh, Bernard, was there ever such a wedding breakfast? No wedding cake, and no time to go back and fetch it!

The party could not help laughing about it; but they had to make the best of the resources they had, and they were very happy. The wedding, of course, was a quiet one.

Bessie wore a very pretty light fawn-coloured silk, with tulle bonnet, and the usual accompaniment of orange blossoms; and Fanny, acting as bridesmaid, was attired in a silver-grey dress, of some soft material.

Bessie's father, and her sisters Marion and Rosalie, were likewise present.

The dear old Rector, as he handed over a certificate after he had performed the ceremony, said,—

“This is a different sort to what you were talking of getting a little while ago: is it not?”

He was playfully alluding to the Government certificate.

When they arrived at the Brinybeach railway station, Bernard called for the unfortunate box that had been forgotten, and the next day it arrived in London with them quite safe. It caused them no little amusement when unpacking it, and Bessie was busy in sending to their friends some of this recovered wedding cake.

As Bernard had been so much away from his business during the last month, they had decided to defer their wedding tour to a more convenient season. And so they arrived at their home in London, and Bessie's household responsibilities commenced at once.

Years have passed since Bernard stood at the

altar with Bessie, and took his wife for better or worse. They are still travelling life's pathway together, looking unto the same Saviour, in sure and certain hope that when called on earth to part, they will meet again in their Father's kingdom.

During their married life they have seen many ups and downs, and suffered many trials and afflictions ; but throughout them all, Bernard has never ceased to love his Bessie, nor to regret that he decided to become a Christian.

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